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# THE SPECTATOR



# Trump. Seriously.

*Freddy Gray and Tim Montgomerie on an anti-hero for our time*

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Are the Oscars racist?  
*Rod Liddle*

The real crash is yet to come  
*Michael Lewis*





**Yves Tanguy (1900-1955)**  
*Sans titre*, 1935  
£300,000-400,000  
© ARS, NY and DACS,  
London 2016.

**Kazuo Shiraga (1924-2008)**  
*Hatsu*, 2007  
£20,000-25,000

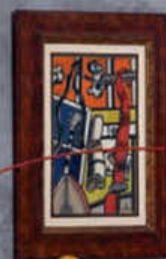


**Alexander Archipenko (1887-1964)**  
*Walking*, 1912  
£70,000-100,000  
© ARS, NY and DACS,  
London 2016.

**Juan Gris (1887-1927)**  
*Le Pierrot à la Guitare*, 1925  
£800,000-1,200,000



**Fernand Léger (1881-1955)**  
*La balalaïka*, 1953  
£300,000-500,000  
© ADAGP, Paris and  
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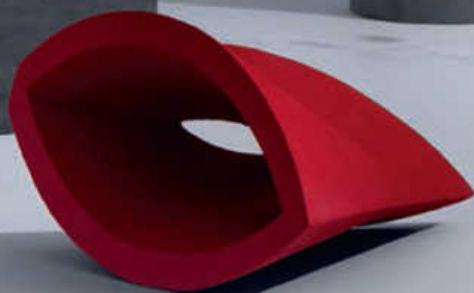
**Arnaldo Pomodoro (b. 1926)**  
*Asse del Movimento, I (Axis of Movement, I)*, 1983  
£60,000-80,000  
© Arnaldo Pomodoro.



**Alexander Calder (1898-1976)**  
*White Dots and Spiral on Blue and Red*, 1960  
£200,000-300,000  
© 2016 Calder Foundation,  
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**Anish Kapoor (b. 1954)**  
*The Pot is God*, 1985  
£70,000-100,000  
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**The Art of the Surreal Evening Sale**  
2 February, immediately following the  
Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale

**Impressionist & Modern Works on Paper Sale**  
3 February, 10.30am

**Impressionist & Modern Art Day Sale**  
3 February, 2.00pm

**Impressionist & Modern Art, South Kensington**  
5 February, 10.30am

**Picasso Ceramics, South Kensington**  
5 February, 2.00pm

**Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Auction**  
11 February, 7.00pm

**Post-War and Contemporary Art Day Auction**  
12 February, 1.00pm

**Paul Delvaux: L'Esprit Belge - A Collection of Prints**  
26 January - 4 February, online auction

**Turi Simeti (b. 1929)**  
*Giallo*, 1998  
£15,000-20,000  
© Turi Simeti.

**Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)**  
*Gros oiseau corrida*, 1953  
£50,000-70,000  
© Succession Picasso/DACS,  
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**Alexander Calder (1898-1976)**  
*Crag with Yellow Boomerang  
and Red Eggplant*, 1974  
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## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### Births

UP. - on 20th December, to Jessica and Mark, a son, Parker, a brother for Phil.

FRACK. - on 20th December, to Tom and Holly, a son, Roo.

CARR. - on 20th December, to James and Victoria, a son, Kit, a brother for Grey.

LOON. - on 21st December, to Nicholas and Claire, a son, Sal.

POWER. - on 21st December, to Michael and Pepita, a son, Max.

CATER. - on 22nd December, to Ashley and Fiona, a daughter, Indy.



### Forthcoming Marriages

Mr W. R. Speed and Miss H. O'Metre  
The engagement is announced between William, son of Mr and Mrs Terence Speed of Bath, Somerset, and Holly O'Metre of

Mr A. ...  
The ...  
A ...  
1 ...  
S ...

Ralph, son of ...  
of Queens ...  
daughter of ...  
of Brighton, St

Mr C.H. Po and Miss H. Lo

The engagement is announced between Chung, son of Chen and Chun Po of Cricklewood, London, and Hua, daughter of Jun and Kun Lo of Brentwood, Essex.

Mr T. Air and Miss G. Conne

The engagement is announced between

Freddie, son of Peter and Rosamund Front of Cowbridge, Wales, and Emilie, daughter of Pierre and Jayne of Montreal, Canada.

Mr H. Roun and Miss C. D'About

The engagement is announced between Henrik, son of Jesper and Gunilla Roun of Stockholm, Sweden, and Clara, daughter of Alain and Christine D'About of Montrose, Scotland.

Mr L. Carp and Miss L. Hark

The engagement is announced between

Mr J. Enn and Miss K. Jin

The engagement is announced between Julian, son of Richard and Cherry Enn of Woburn, Bedfordshire and Katy, daughter of Chin and Cheng Jin of Shanghai, China.

Mr F. Gere and Miss M. Bocks

The engagement is announced between Frederick, son of Mike and Carmella Gere of Marlow, Buckinghamshire, and Miranda, daughter of Antony and Rose Bocks of Hampstead, London.

Mr T.R. Dash and Miss L.E. Board

The engagement is announced between Thomas, son of Timothy and the late Maureen Dash of Ashton, Cheshire, and Lisa Board, daughter of James and Megan Board of Wimbledon, London.

Mr H. Spoil and Miss J. Herr

The engagement is announced between Henry, son of Simon and Alison Spoil of Pill, Bristol, and Jacinta, daughter of Rob and Liz Herr of Northumberland.



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# THE SPECTATOR

ESTABLISHED 1828

## Safety first

This week brings to a close an absurdly overblown *cause célèbre*. The Court of Appeal ruled that David Miranda's detention at Heathrow three years ago under the Terrorism Act was lawful. He had been part of a professional operation leaking classified information to the *Guardian*, which compromised British and American national security.

Yet the judgement was hailed as a victory for Miranda because the court also noted that the Terrorism Act didn't include sufficient protection for journalists carrying sensitive information. It asked Parliament to look again, in order that it be compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights — even though, in this case, there was no breach.

This magazine is a staunch defender of press freedom. We have opposed a statutory press regulation body, as recommended by Lord Leveson after his inquiry into phone hacking and the ethics of the press. But as Oliver Wendell Holmes noted a century ago, the right to free speech does not excuse someone who falsely shouts 'fire!' in a crowded theatre. Neither does the right to a free press extend to the indiscriminate release of secret documents which put agents' lives in danger, or alert terrorists to the gaps in our capabilities. Only an extremist libertarian, who believed all activities of the state to be illegitimate, could think otherwise.

The Miranda case was never about press freedom. It was about the right of the security services to protect secrets vital to their activities and defend national security. Miranda

was arrested because he was the partner of Glenn Greenwald, a *Guardian* journalist suspected of carrying classified documents from Edward Snowden, the renegade CIA computer engineer who had been granted asylum in Russia. Amnesty International said that the 'only possible intent' behind the detention was 'to harass him' for no other reason than his personal relationship to Greenwald.

As things turned out, Miranda (who had been changing planes en route from

*David Miranda was carrying a laptop on to which 58,000 highly classified documents had been loaded*

Moscow) was carrying a laptop onto which 58,000 highly classified documents had been loaded. At the time, outrage over Miranda's arrest was justified on the grounds that if the police stopped him, they could stop anyone. But the only people who need to worry are those who intend to use their partner as a mule for industrial-scale sabotage.

It might not have been the intention of Glenn Greenwald, Edward Snowden, the *Guardian* or anyone else to release these documents indiscriminately. But the fact that the information was at large was itself a good enough reason for David Miranda to have been detained and searched. This ought not to be controversial: the very fact that the files had been leaked was a risk to Britain's national security.

The irony is that some of those who have supported Miranda, Greenwald and

Snowden proved to be no friends of a free press when Lord Leveson proposed a statutory body for regulating the press. They did not protest when journalists from the *Sun* started to be hauled before the courts on charges of corrupting public officials. Liberty, the civil rights group, also backed Miranda, yet has been a somewhat lukewarm supporter of press freedom. The *Guardian*, which has tried to elevate the Miranda case into a battle for the soul of the nation, shamefully endorsed statutory regulation of the press.

The Snowden revelations did help to sell newspapers but their disclosure inflicted lasting harm on the capabilities of Britain's security services. As a direct result of the revelations, there are large parts of the world in which our spies have little to no presence: the leaks meant that they had to pull out agents and wind up intelligence networks. The revelations about US espionage alerted jihadis who had been using various US-based internet providers: they changed their behaviour and became harder to track. It also poisoned relationships between security services and email companies.

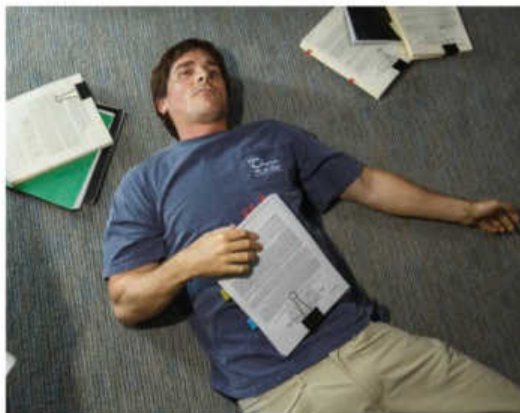
The Court of Appeal judgement said that 'if journalists and their sources can have no expectation of confidentiality, they may decide against providing information on sensitive matters of public interest'. Quite so. But in this case, journalistic integrity was not at stake.

The judgement settled what ought to have been the obvious from the outset: that no one has the right to steal and publish vast amounts of secret intelligence that damages the national security of Britain or her allies.





*Nanny knows best, p20*



*See this film, p43*



*Memoirs of a Messenger, p38*

## THE WEEK

- 5 **Leading article**
- 9 **Portrait of the Week**
- 11 **Diary** Don't fix Easter's date  
*A.N. Wilson*
- 12 **Politics** What's Cameron's secret?  
*James Forsyth*
- 13 **The Spectator's Notes**  
False allegations of sex abuse  
*Charles Moore*
- 16 **From the archive** Bad drivers
- 17 **Rod Liddle** The racist Oscars
- 19 **Barometer** Roll out the oil barrel
- 25 **Matthew Parris** Rhodes's statue
- 26 **Hugo Rifkind** How to speak Corbynglish
- 28 **Letters** The EU tyranny, wildlife on television and Lord Olivier's sex life
- 30 **Any other business**  
Come back Pesto, all is forgiven  
*Martin Vander Weyer*

- 14 **The Trump phenomenon**  
By tapping into America's anger, 'The Donald' is trouncing all rivals  
*Freddy Gray*
- 15 **Lashing out in all directions**  
No one is safe from a Trump kicking  
*Tim Montgomerie*
- 16 **Elite sport**  
Cricket is dying out in state schools  
*Michael Henderson*
- 18 **High finance, low tricks**  
*The Big Short* author interviewed  
*Liam Halligan*
- 20 **Rise of the Norland Nanny**  
Oligarchs love Edwardian childcare  
*Lara Prendergast*
- 22 **What Brexit looks like**  
Life outside the EU would be good  
*Daniel Hannan*
- 23 **Israel Notebook**  
Why Israel? Winter sun, of course  
*Anne Applebaum*

## BOOKS & ARTS

### BOOKS

- 32 **Jonathan Steinberg**  
The Holy Roman Empire, by Peter H. Wilson
- 34 **Caroline Moore**  
The Noise of Time, by Julian Barnes
- 35 **Mark Cocker**  
The Great Soul of Siberia, by Sooyong Park
- 36 **Andrew Lycett**  
Alive, Alive Oh!, by Diana Athill
- Horatio Clare**  
The Outrun, by Amy Liptrot
- 37 **Josephine Livingstone**  
Drawing Blood, by Molly Crabapple
- 38 **Mark Mason**  
What Goes Around, by Emily Chappell
- Ysenda Maxtone Graham**  
Avenue of Mysteries, by John Irving
- 39 **Alistair Elliot**  
'A Day Off': a poem
- Anna Aslanyan**  
The Mother, by Maxim Gorky

**Cover** by Morten Morland. **Drawings** by Michael Heath, Castro, K.J. Lamb, Robert Thompson, Nick Newman, Phil Disley, RGJ, Geoff Thompson, Guy Venables, Bernie, Adam Singleton, Kipper Williams.

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**Editor: Fraser Nelson**



*A family affair, p42*



*Delacroix's prophetic vision, p40*



*Testing times, p16*

## LIFE

### ARTS

- 40 **Martin Gayford**  
Eugène Delacroix
- 42 **Interview**  
Andrew Davies  
Stephen Smith
- 43 **Cinema**  
The Big Short  
Deborah Ross
- Theatre**  
The Long Road South;  
This Will End Badly  
Lloyd Evans
- 44 **Dance**  
Le Corsaire  
Ismene Brown
- 46 **Music**  
Damian Thompson
- Radio**  
Kate Chisholm
- 47 **Television**  
James Delingpole

### LIFE

- 53 **High life** Taki
- Low life** Jeremy Clarke
- 54 **Real life** Melissa Kite
- 55 **Long life** Alexander Chancellor
- 56 **The turf** Robin Oakley
- Bridge** Janet de Botton
- 57 **Wine club** Jonathan Ray

### AND FINALLY . . .

- 48 **Notes on...** The Clare Valley  
Rebecca Weisser
- 58 **Chess** Raymond Keene
- Competition** Lucy Vickery
- 59 **Crossword**
- 60 **Status anxiety**  
Toby Young
- Battle for Britain**  
Michael Heath
- 61 **Sport** Roger Alton
- Your problems solved**  
Mary Killen
- 62 **Food** Tanya Gold
- Mind your language**  
Dot Wordsworth

'Why were The Big Short and Flashboys available to me to be written? These stories should have been gobbled-up by newspaper and magazine journalists'  
**Michael Lewis, p18**

'It's important not to get angry. You can lose all hope if you can't laugh at yourself and at life'  
**Stephen Hawking, p46**

I sometimes think that East Germany did win the war in the end, only not quite in the way it planned  
**James Delingpole, p47**

### CONTRIBUTORS

**Liam Halligan** is an economist, financial journalist and broadcaster and a former *Moscow Times* columnist. He interviews *The Big Short* author, Michael Lewis, on p. 18

**Anne Applebaum**, whose *Israel Notebook* is on p. 23, can speak French, Polish and Russian. Her books include *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944–56*.

**Jonathan Steinberg** is a professor of modern European history and the author of an acclaimed 2011 biography of Bismarck. He reviews *The Holy Roman Empire* by Peter H. Wilson on p. 32.

**Andrew Lycett** has written biographies of Arthur Conan Doyle, Ian Fleming, Wilkie Collins and Rudyard Kipling. On p. 36 he reviews *Alive, Alive Oh!* by Diana Athill.

**Horatio Clare** is the author of *Down to the Sea in Ships* and, most recently, *Orison for a Curlew*. He reviews *The Outrun* by Amy Liptrott on p. 36.



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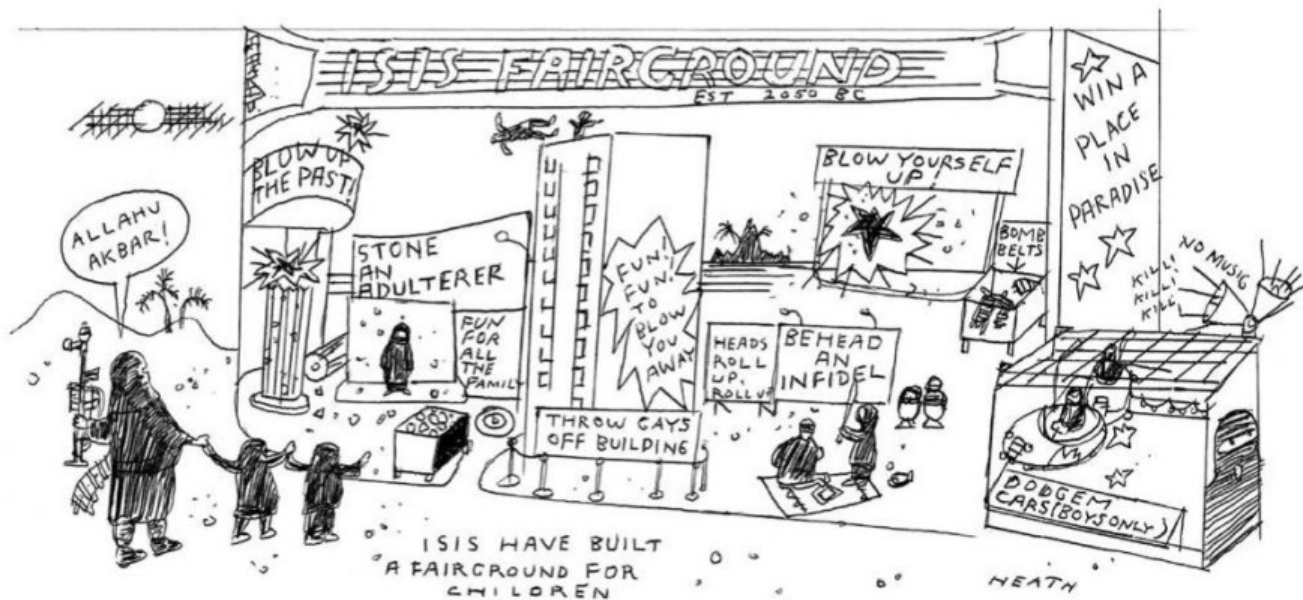
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# PORTRAIT OF THE WEEK



## Home

David Cameron, the Prime Minister, said that Muslim women must learn English, and that those who had entered on spousal visas would be told halfway through their five-year spousal settlement: 'You can't guarantee you can stay if you are not improving your language.' He said that learning English had 'a connection with combating extremism'. A heterosexual couple went to the High Court to claim the right to enter into a civil partnership. MI5, the security service, was rated as Britain's most gay-friendly employer, following a survey by the organisation Stonewall.

Mark Carney, the governor of the Bank of England, said: 'Now is not the time to raise interest rates.' Tata Steel said it was cutting 1,050 jobs in the United Kingdom, including 750 at Port Talbot, Britain's biggest steelworks; the company and unions blamed cheap imports from China. Unemployment fell to 5.1 per cent, the lowest since 2005. The annual rate of inflation rose to 0.2 per cent in December from 0.1 per cent in November, as measured by the Consumer Prices Index, and to 1.2 per cent from 1.1 per cent according to the Retail Prices Index. Alan Rickman, the actor, died aged 69.

The British Medical Association suspended a 48-hour junior doctors' strike in England planned for 26-28 January. In a report on why Labour lost the election in 2015, Dame Margaret Beckett picked out four reasons: Ed Miliband; 'the myth' that Labour was to blame for the financial crash; benefits and immigration; and a

fear of the SNP 'propping up' a minority Labour government. A report by Sir Richard Henriques, a retired High Court judge, found that Greville Janner, who died in December, could have been prosecuted for child abuse in 1991, 2002 and 2007, had it not been for failings by Leicestershire police and the Crown Prosecution Service. Nicolas Bramall expressed outrage at the continuing anonymity of the man who made baseless accusations of child abuse against his father Field Marshal Lord Bramall, aged 92, who has been told by letter that, after ten months, the police would take no further action.

## Abroad

The price of oil fell below \$30 a barrel, compared with more than \$100 in January 2014. Economic sanctions against Iran were lifted by the P5+1 group (the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia, plus Germany) after the International Atomic Energy Agency certified that it had complied with restrictions on its nuclear activities; Iran responded by ordering its oil production to increase by 500,000 barrels a day. China's economy grew by 6.9 per cent in 2015, according to official figures; its slowest rate in 25 years. Glenn Frey, a guitarist with The Eagles who helped write 'Hotel California', died aged 67. Three winners from California, Tennessee and Florida shared a \$1.6 billion lottery prize.

At least 29 people were killed in an attack on the Splendid Hotel in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, carried out by gunmen from al-Qaeda in the Islamic

Maghreb. A day earlier, four civilians and four attackers died in a bomb and gun attack in Jakarta, Indonesia, by adherents of the Islamic State. In Iraq, at least 18,800 people had been killed between the beginning of 2014 and the end of October 2015, and 3.2 million people displaced internally, according to a UN report which said that the 'so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant continues to commit systematic and widespread violence'.

The EU hatched a plan to scrap the Dublin agreement that obliges migrants seeking asylum to claim it in the first country they come to. The Danish parliament debated proposals to seize migrants' cash and jewellery worth more than £1,000. Migrants attempting to cross from Greece to Macedonia found more stringent border checks. Male asylum seekers were barred from a public swimming pool in Bornheim in Germany after women complained of harassment. Police told 2,000 migrants camping within 100 metres of a motorway in Calais to move their tents. Sixty firemen put out a large fire on the top floor of the Ritz Hotel in Paris. A man died and four others were left with neurological problems during a drug trial in Rennes, France. Athletes from Russia and Turkey who failed drugs tests had paid bribes to the International Association of Athletics Federations, in which 'corruption was embedded', according to a report by the World Anti-Doping Agency. The Geospatial Information Authority of Japan proposed dropping the swastika symbol, called manji in Japanese, as a marker for temples on tourist maps for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. CSH



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# EMISSION: IMPOSSIBLE

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**"LONDON TAKES  
JUST ONE WEEK TO  
BREACH ANNUAL AIR  
POLLUTION LIMITS."**

- The Guardian, 8th Jan 2016

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According to official monitoring, annual air pollution limits in London were breached in just the first week of 2016. Combine this with the fact that air around Heathrow regularly breaches EU air quality limits, a third runway with millions of extra car journeys could only make things worse.

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# DIARY

A.N. Wilson



Quarrelling about the date of Easter has been a Christian pastime for centuries. The chief bone of contention is whether Easter should be held on 14th Nisan in the Jewish calendar — that is, at a fixed point of the lunar month — or whether it should be held on the nearest Sunday to this date. The Celtic church(es) evidently had their own ideas on the question. In the year 651, Queen Eanfleda of Northumbria was fasting on what she regarded as Palm Sunday on the very day that her husband, Oswy, King of Northumbria, was celebrating Easter. Behind the seemingly batty arguments lay the world-changing conviction that Christ's death and resurrection had been a new Passover. Now we discover that Christian leaders are uniting behind the idea of having a fixed date for Easter, regardless of the cycle of the moon. Their reason? If the reports are correct, it is to allow people to plan their holidays. This destroys all the poetry and symbolism of Easter's relation to the Jewish Passover. Apparently Pope Francis, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Coptic Pope Tawodros II — presumably in consultation with Ryanair, Tesco and Disney World — are all agreed on the plan to turn the central mystery of the Christian faith into a mere spring break.

Meanwhile, the Archbishop of Canterbury last week assembled the Anglican Primates from all over the world to see if they could resolve the vexed question of modern 'sexuality'. After a token apology to gays, transsexuals et al for the 'hurt' caused them over the years, the Archbishop agreed to 'suspend' the American Episcopal Church for three years as a punishment for supporting gay marriages: our gentle Archbishop's substitute for excommunication by bell, book and candle. I am sure that the American bishops were sobbing into their in-flight trays of rubber chicken all the way across the Atlantic at the prospect of being excluded from various pan-Anglican committees about climate change or liturgical reform. It is easy to mock the Anglican liberals. Especially if you are one, as I find to my surprise, in old age, I have (sort of) become. The objections made by some African delegates to the American church, however, were truly stomach-turning.

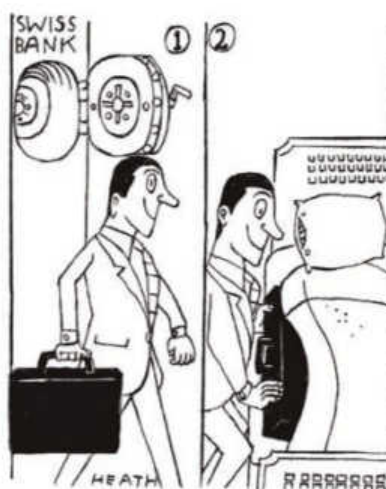
If only the Archbishop of Canterbury had said to them words to this effect: 'The Bible scarcely mentions homosexuality. If you are so keen on obeying the Bible, why not obey some of its more obvious teachings, such as the repeated injunction not to give your money on usury; or the clear duty not to sit in judgment on other people?'

The Chancellor of the University of Oxford, Chris Patten, recently said there was nothing of which we should be

intolerant except intolerance. Probably *The Danish Girl* is a prettified version of a tragic life, but I found it a moving film. The wife of the Danish girl is heart-broken, partly because she has lost the man she loves, but partly by her failure in empathy. She is trying, all the time, to understand what has happened to him/her. She can't do it. I do not suppose any of us can, except those who know that inside their bodies they are really a different gender. Alas, it is not only African bishops who are intolerant. Dr Germaine Greer, whom God preserve, is entitled to her views about transsexuals, as is her fellow Aussie Barry Humphries. I love and admire them both, but what makes them so certain that men who undergo the strange journey of living as a woman and then having an 'op' are merely 'mutilated men', not women? Are any of us 'merely' anything? Aren't all lives transmutations of one sort or another? Germaine and Barry are cleverer people than I am — but it seems stupid to lay down the law (literally) to transsexuals about a matter which, by definition, only transsexuals can understand. How could it hurt the rest of us if a number of people ask to change the gender classification on their passport?

One answer could be, when a man discovers he is a woman but happens to be a member of an exclusively all-male club. I have momentarily mislaid my copy of Jan Morris's superb autobiography *Conundrum*, so I cannot remember if she tells this story herself, or whether it is merely repeated in the club where she was once a much-loved member. She spent her last night as a man sleeping in the club, and bravely went into the coffee room for dinner dressed in female attire. Monsignor Alfred Gilbey, the club pet, was dining at his usual table, clad, as so often, in an elegantly buttoned soutane, with a sash of magenta watered silk around his waist. Seeing James Morris, as Jan still technically was, sitting at her table harmlessly ordering some lamb cutlets, the Firbankian cleric summoned the head waiter and asked for the eviction of Morris because of the impropriety of her costume.

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A.N. Wilson's latest book is the biography Victoria: A Life.



# The centre-right is failing world-wide – so what's the secret of Cameron's success?

There are times when Westminster's obsession with US politics is embarrassing for even the strongest believer in the Anglo-American relationship. Monday was one of those days: MPs debated banning Donald Trump, the reality TV star turned presidential hopeful, from entering Britain. Leaving aside the illiberal absurdity of this, Trump hadn't even said he was planning a visit. It was a pathetic attempt by MPs to insert themselves into the US presidential race.

But what cannot be denied is the extent to which Trump is shaking up US politics, as Freddy Gray explains on page 14. After the angry Republican primary and the failure of establishment candidates to gain traction, David Cameron's achievement in winning a majority at the general election and holding his party together seems remarkable. He now has a good claim to be the most successful centre-right politician in the western world.

It is not only in America that the right is in crisis. In Canada, Stephen Harper's government was defeated by Justin Trudeau. In Australia, the Tony Abbott experiment has been brought to an end by his own party. New Zealand's John Key is the only other centre-right leader in the English-speaking world who can claim to be a success now.

The troubles of the centre-right aren't limited to the Anglosphere. Angela Merkel has plunged her continent, her country and her chancellorship into crisis with her refugee policy. The tensions it has created within her party have the potential to do long-term structural damage to the German centre-right. In France, despite François Hollande's unpopularity, polls suggest that Nicolas Sarkozy would be knocked out in the first round of the presidential election.

So, why is Cameron succeeding when other centre-right leaders are not? In part, it is because the British economy is continuing to grow and create jobs. The economic recovery means that there isn't the same level of anti-establishment rage in Britain as there is in the United States.

But Cameron has also benefited from something that looked like a failure at the time, the split on the right. When senior Republicans visited London after their party's 2012 defeat, the sense was that despite the loss, their long-term outlook – with the insurgent Tea Party wing still inside the party – was better than that of the Tories. It had

seen members go off to join Ukip and the right was divided for the first time in British political history. Senior Tories feared that this analysis was right; that Cameron's legacy would be a split that would leave the Tories struggling to ever again win a majority under the first-past-the-post system.

Ultimately, this split benefited Cameron. It helped the Tories become more attractive to centrist voters. On polling day, they gained more votes from those who supported Labour and the Liberal Democrats in 2010 than they lost to Ukip. It also meant that Cameron wasn't trying to sound as angry and as frustrated with modern Britain as these defecting voters.

In contrast, all the Republican contend-

*Cameron's refugee policy has been both humane and politically sustainable. Merkel's has been neither*

ers in this primary season are trying to find ways to connect with the angry mood of their selectorate. Even Marco Rubio, the most mild-mannered of the candidates, has felt obliged to talk about how the gun he purchased on Christmas Eve is the 'last line of defence between Isis and my family'.

In some ways, Britain's centre-right is simply an election cycle ahead of other countries in terms of dealing with the challenge posed by insurgent parties. The current concern in Merkel's CDU about the threat posed by the AfD – the Eurosceptic, anti-immigration party – in the forthcoming state elections mirrors the worries in Tory circles about Ukip in the middle of the last parliament.

But Cameron also deserves credit for keeping his head when others lost theirs. His refugee policy has been both humane – concentrating on those in the camps rather than those with the resources to get to Europe – and politically sustainable. Merkel's has been neither. Given Cameron's suc-

cess, it is puzzling that more politicians aren't seeking to emulate his model. In part, this is because he isn't interested in going around the world selling his approach. There was no post-election victory lap of addresses to US think tanks and the like. George Osborne, by contrast, is far keener on the global political circuit.

Another reason is that Cameron has turned on its head Mario Cuomo's dictum that you campaign in poetry and govern in prose. Cameron's election campaign was well executed. But not even he would have called it exciting. Instead, he emphasised – and endlessly repeated – simple, clear arguments about economic competence, leadership and the need for a majority government. There was little talk of the social reform agenda which Cameron now hopes will be his legacy.

Watching him campaign in 2015, few would have imagined that his party conference speech five months later would concentrate on the need for 'true equality', an 'all-out assault on poverty' and the need to celebrate the 'proudest multiracial democracy on earth'. Indeed, much of what makes the Tories so politically interesting wasn't trailed in that campaign. Think, for instance, of George Osborne's living wage, announced in his post-election Budget.

This new Tory agenda is designed to help the party appeal to new voting groups and to add a sense that the Tories share voters' values. This might seem like common sense. But the Republicans are engaged in almost exactly the opposite exercise during this primary season. The candidates are indulging in ever more shrill rhetoric on the immigration question, to the despair of those concerned with the future of the party.

The dire state of the centre-right around the world should worry the Tories, even though they are the exception to it. Today, successful political parties rely on borrowing and adapting ideas from other countries. Many of the policies that the Tories are pursuing have their roots overseas – compassionate Conservatism comes out of the US, free schools from Sweden and prison reform from Texas. An international centre-right with a closed mind will not be much use to the Tories when they need to renew themselves, as every political party has to, at least once a generation.



*'Bit of an anomaly. I've just been told there's no accounting for taste.'*

**SPECTATOR.CO.UK/COFFEEHOUSE**  
Hourly updates from Parliament and beyond.

# THE SPECTATOR'S NOTES

Charles Moore

Many have rightly attacked the police for their handling of the demented accusations against Field Marshal Lord Bramall, now at last dropped. They ostentatiously descended on his village in huge numbers, chatted about the case in the pub and pointlessly searched his house for ten hours. But one needs to understand that their pursuit of Lord Bramall — though not their exact methods — is the result of the system. Because the doctrine has now been established that all 'victims' must be 'believed', the police must take seriously every sex abuse accusation made and record the accusation as a reported crime (hence the huge increase in sex abuse figures). Even if you walked in off the street and told the police that you had been sexually abused by the Met Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, or Sir David Attenborough or the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta (the criminal law seems now to be reaching beyond the grave), they would have to pursue the claim, and would be open to disciplinary action and media obloquy if they did not. This happens, in fact, every day, when people make malicious or insane accusations against people who are not famous and whose lives are duly ruined.

At least in a criminal case, the evidence must eventually be publicly heard. This is not true, obviously, of civil child abuse cases, and it is doubly untrue when they are settled against people who are dead. The more I look at how the late Bishop George Bell of Chichester has been pronounced by his own diocese to have abused a child roughly 65 years ago, the less can I see that any proper process was followed. No defence of Bell was offered. No corroboration of the one accuser's claim was produced. The names of those deciding against Bell have not been released, nor the amount of money paid to the complainant, nor who bore the legal costs, nor whether legal proceedings were formally begun. We do not know which experts interviewed the complainant, nor in what their expertise consisted. We do not even know that the experts, when looking at the claim, were aware that it was made against Bell or



whether he was unnamed. We are invited to infer that the alleged offences took place in the Bishop's Palace, but we do not know that, nor how serious they were. We do not properly understand why, after 65 years, the facts somehow became plain, having appeared less so in 1995, and having never been raised before 1995. We have not been told why the police were consulted on the matter, since it is not the job of the police to investigate crimes where the alleged perpetrator is dead; nor why the church authorities, to justify their actions, saw fit to publish the opinion of the police that they would have arrested Bell if they'd had a chance. We don't know why the Dean of Chichester had nothing to do with the investigating panel, and what the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury was in directing the current Bishop of Chichester, Martin Warner. We do know that Dr Warner said the church was acting in the interests of 'transparency', but it is hard to think of a process more opaque. So admirers of Bishop Bell (from whom I now have a heavy postbag) will not let the matter rest until they know what the process was by which his own church destroyed him.

Airey Neave was born 100 years ago this Saturday. He was the queenmaker — the Tory backbencher who could reach backbench colleagues beyond Margaret Thatcher's reach and persuade them to choose her as their new leader. He was also the first British officer to escape from Colditz, one of those involved in the Nuremberg trials, an intelligence officer and an accomplished writer. Mrs Thatcher became leader in February 1975 and Neave became her chief of staff and Northern Ireland spokesman. On 30 March 1979, five weeks before Mrs Thatcher won her first general election, Neave was killed by a

bomb planted on his car in the House of Commons car park by the Irish National Liberation Army. 'Some devils got him,' she said that day. 'They must never, never, never be allowed to triumph.' In October 1984, Mrs Thatcher herself narrowly escaped death when the IRA blew up the Grand Hotel in Brighton on the night before her party conference speech. On 30 July 1990, a few months before her fall, the IRA murdered Ian Gow with a car bomb at his house in Sussex. Gow had been Neave's parliamentary private secretary, and after Neave's murder, became Mrs Thatcher's outstandingly successful PPS. Like Neave, he held strong unionist views about Ireland. So Mrs Thatcher's career as Prime Minister was book-ended and punctuated by Irish Republican attacks aimed directly at her and those closest to her. It would be an exaggeration to say that 'some devils' were allowed to triumph, but it would be a statement of plain fact to say that Jeremy Corbyn (and Ken Livingstone and John McDonnell) led the way in welcoming the devils' leaders and blaming Britain, not the terrorists, for IRA violence. This should not be forgotten.

I have always thought that China could not ultimately succeed as a polity — and even as an economy — so long as its elite remained in power without democracy and the rule of law. So far, I have been spectacularly wrong. China's consistent reform since 1978 is the longest-running example of a single successful strategy in the history of modern government. But I haven't completely abandoned my theory. Markets and capitalism require transparency, and that is exactly what the Chinese stock market lacks. So when there is a shock, you cannot trust it. And if you cannot trust it, you run away. This happens a good deal in the far-from-transparent West, but our system is, to some extent, self-remedying. Is China's? The alarming thing is, we don't know.

What do you understand by 'a case' of wine? Twelve bottles surely. A reader writes to warn that, in the mind of Tesco's, 'a case' consists of six bottles. A case where every little doesn't help.

# The Trump phenomenon

'The Donald' is winning because he is angrier than his rivals

FREDDY GRAY

Ronald Reagan wooed America with sunny optimism. From the offset, Donald Trump has offered something much darker. He began his presidential campaign on 16 June by declaring that the 'American dream is dead.' He said that the country was being run by 'losers'. 'We have people that don't have it,' he said. 'We have people that are morally corrupt. We have people that are selling this country down the drain.' He insisted that only he, Donald J. Trump, had what it took 'to make America great again'.

This was not 'Morning in America'; more Midnight in America. Trump's pitch was gloom, insults and arrogance. Strangely enough, however, that turned out to be exactly what millions of American voters wanted to hear. By trashing the United States and comparing his country unfavourably to himself, Trump tapped into something deep and powerful in the American psyche. Now there are only a few days left before the presidential election process starts, and 'The Donald' continues to storm the polls. He probably won't be president, but it now looks as if he probably will be the Republican nominee — the heir to Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt and Eisenhower. It's a mind-boggling phenomenon.

In the early days of the Trump campaign, commentators on both sides of the Atlantic refused to take Trump seriously. They laughed at his vanity, his facelifts, his fake hair. Some said that he was running simply to promote his TV show, his businesses and his book (his earlier tilts at the presidency did appear to have been PR stunts). Others thought he was another Republican cabaret act; similar to Herman Cain, the pizza magnate who enjoyed a brief success in the 2012 race for the Republican nomination, but with extra ego on top.

Trump, however, soon recognised a weird link between his obnoxiousness and his popularity. Every time the commentariat thought that he had gone too far, he surged in the polls. He said that Mexican immigrants were rapists; his popularity went up. He made a sexist remark about a Fox News anchor's menstruation; his popularity went up. He mocked a disabled *New York Times* reporter, his ratings wavered. So he upped his efforts and called for a blanket ban on all Muslims entering the US. His polls rock-

eted. The experts kept telling people not to worry: political gravity would bring this joker down to earth. Nate Silver, the famous statistician, told the media to 'stop freaking out about Donald Trump's polls'. The Trump bubble would pop, he suggested, when it hit the reality of the election cycle, because voters in American primaries don't make up their minds until late. Others pointed out that in polls for the opening Iowa caucuses on 1 February, Trump had never been in the lead. But earlier this month, Trump moved ahead in Iowa. He is now on 35 per cent in the national polls — at least 15 points clear of his nearest rival, Ted Cruz. The Repub-



lican establishment is finally beginning to accept the once-unthinkable idea of a Trump nomination. It's rumoured that, at a private retreat last week, Republican congressmen were given polling data suggesting that Trump would do better against Hillary Clinton than Cruz, who is associated with the Tea Party and the most toxic aspects of American conservatism.

The party cannot control the nomination process in the way that it did. The hierarchy's chosen candidate, Jeb Bush, son of one president and brother of another, has failed to make an impact. Their back-up options — Marco Rubio, Chris Christie, John Kasich — have also struggled. One by one, the comforting theories about how Trump's maver-

ick candidacy might be stopped have been knocked flat. It was said, for instance, that Trump, a thrice-married New Yorker with wobbly views on abortion and gay rights, could not win over evangelicals in southern states. Yet he is now polling above Cruz, the son of a church pastor, across the south.

It was said that once the weaker candidates dropped out, sensible voters would consolidate their support behind one of Trump's rivals. But the latest polls suggest otherwise: in a three-way race, Trump might pick up 45 per cent of the vote, while Cruz and Rubio would be on about 30 per cent and 20 per cent respectively.

If Trump fails in Iowa, or in New Hampshire eight days later, his candidacy could suddenly collapse. That's what happened in 2004 to the Democratic populist demagogue Howard Dean. Yet Trump's rise is a new challenge to electoral logic and common sense. How can so many Republican supporters pick such a preposterously smug man who surely — *surely* — has no chance of reaching the White House? This truth is that Trumpmania has nothing to do with ideology, since everybody knows that he has none. Polls suggest just one in seven Republican voters regard Trump as a 'true conservative'; but a majority say he is 'bold', 'strong', and (best of all) a 'Washington outsider.' In the current climate, those qualities seem to be most important.

Trump's anti-politics appeal makes him seem like an American version of the insurgent forces now dismantling established parties across Europe. In his willingness to tear down the party he hopes to lead, he is not all that different to Jeremy Corbyn. In his economic nationalism and anti-Islamism, he echoes Marine Le Pen. In his playing to the gallery, he resembles the Italian-comedian-turned-politician Beppe Grillo — though Silvio Berlusconi might make for a better like-for-like comparison.

But the Trump phenomenon is also uniquely American because it is uniquely angry. Trump's greatest political asset is his rage at the broken promise of America. His ferocious denunciations of politicians and the media reflect the mood of the old American middle class, who increasingly feel that living in the greatest country in the world is not what it was cracked up to be. He appeals to the children of those aspirational



Reagan voters who feel abandoned by globalisation and betrayed by Washington. In the 20th century, anger against 'the system' was mostly expressed through the American left. It was mixed up with civil rights activism and minority politics. But in the 2000s and early 2010s, what the American anthropologist Peter Wood called 'the new anger' moved across the political spectrum — and started to take over the soul of the Republican party.

Trump, more than any of his rivals, is able to tap into the deep wells of American fury — and he knows it. He never misses an opportunity to talk about China, for instance, which feeds the nation's insecurity about becoming the world's second-largest economy. 'I will gladly accept the mantle of anger,' he said last week. 'Our military is a disaster. Our health care is a horror show... We have no borders. Our veterans are being treated horribly. Illegal immigration is beyond belief. Our country is being run by incompetent people. And yes, I am angry. And I won't be angry when we fix it, but until we fix it, I'm very, very angry.'

It doesn't matter that Trump's speech jumps about all over place: his inarticulacy

*Trump was born rich, and has grown richer outsourcing jobs to China and Mexico. But his supporters don't care*

is itself an expression of rage. Nor does it matter that his policies for restoring American greatness amount to little more than a few madcap ideas: building a giant wall against Mexican immigration, for instance, or turning himself into a one-man sales operation for all American industry. Angry voters don't have time for details. They just want someone to share their frustration, even if that person is himself a grotesque example of a global elite that has grown richer as average American incomes stagnate. Trump was born rich, and has grown even richer outsourcing jobs to China and Mexico. But his supporters don't care. On the contrary, as Trump repeatedly tells them, he's got so much money he can't be bought — unlike those politicians in Washington.

As a former chairman of the Republican National Committee, Michael Steele must have spent months wishing that the Trump phenomenon would die down. Last week he admitted that it was time to face facts: people are going to start voting soon. When asked if anyone could stop Trump, he said: 'That window has closed and I think Donald Trump effectively closed it over the last couple of months... You tell me: who stops him and when do they do it? He's polling anywhere from 33 to 36 per cent in every poll in the country... You think those percentages are just going to dissipate?'

In the next few weeks, America — and the world — will find out.

# Lashing out in all directions

Trump denounces Muslims, Mexicans... and millionaires

TIM MONTGOMERIE

The best explanation for the Donald Trump phenomenon was given to me by a woman I met at one of his recent rallies. She'd spent the best part of three decades backing conventional Republican candidates. But, she said, 'not again — not ever again'.

A good politician, she said, does enough unpopular things to make a difference to the nation — but not so many that they couldn't be re-elected. The mark of a good politician is 'which unpopular causes they choose'.

She had had enough of Republican politicians explaining to her that putting a time-limit on abortion was 'too unpopular'. Why restricting immigration was 'too hard'. Why cutting the benefits and entitlements of hard-working families was 'unfortunate but necessary'. Yet those same politicians always found time, resolve and political capital to cut taxes for the rich and protect corporate perks. Republican candidates like Jeb Bush and Marco Rubio, she explained, were in the laps of rich donors and the US Chamber of Commerce.

The rally in Manassas, Virginia, was extraordinary: one of the most electrifying political events that I have seen. Those present felt that they were part of something, that they had finally found a candidate whose anger matched theirs. Time and time again, the billionaire tycoon attacked big business — and the crowd loved it. Trump received sustained cheers for attacking Marco Rubio for missing Senate votes in order to attend a Californian fundraiser.

Other candidates claim to understand voters' anger in some sort of detached, academic way. Trump embodies it. His promise to kick a system that large numbers of Americans think is rotten and corrupt rings true — because that's all Trump does at every one of his rallies. He kicks the way Washington works. He kicks fellow Republicans. He kicks the media. And, yes, unforgivably, he kicks people like Mexicans and Muslims — scapegoating and smearing whole peoples for the sins of a few. But the more he says things that no conventional politician would

Washington

ever say, the more he reinforces the idea that he's not one of the conventional politicians who are so widely despised.

As I spoke to other Trump supporters, his campaign anthem blared out from the loudspeakers: 'We're not gonna take it / No, we ain't gonna take it / We're not gonna take it any more'. The song comes from Twisted Sister's 1984 album *Stay Hungry* — which, again, captures something of the nature of the rebellion that is happening inside the Republican party.

Revolutions in history don't normally tend to happen when peasants are starving. They happen after the worst of the crisis has passed, basic survival has been ensured — but while the memory of injustice is still strong. That's where we seem to be now, nearly a decade after the economic crash, on both right and left. Now the ship has been steadied, people still think a reckoning is needed. Big business and big banks, in particular, need taking down a peg or two.

Conservative Brits may look on in amazement — but it's worth

*People think a reckoning is needed. Big business and big banks need taking down a peg or two*

remembering that Trump does have a point. It wasn't Karl Marx who accused leading business people of being 'all for themselves, and nothing for other people'. It wasn't Friedrich Engels who condemned the 'mean rapacity' and 'sneaking arts' of many merchants and manufacturers. It was Adam Smith. The father of modern economics wasn't an uncritical defender of free enterprise. He knew that markets could lead to extraordinary selfishness.

The Republican party is just one of many right-of-centre institutions that appears to have forgotten this centuries-old truth. Millions of its traditional supporters are currently providing the 'Grand Old Party' with a painful re-education in a basic point: what's good for Wall Street isn't always good for Main Street. This time, they'd like the lesson to sink in — and their vehicle for this lesson is Donald Trump.

# Elite sport

The England team may be riding high, but state schools have all but abandoned cricket

MICHAEL HENDERSON

England's cricketers won a remarkable Test match inside three days in the bearpit of Johannesburg, a victory that put them 2-0 up in the four-match series, with only the final Test to play. It is a remarkable achievement by Alastair Cook's team because, before a ball had been bowled, most judges expected South Africa, the No. 1 ranked team in the world, to claim another triumph by right.

In particular it was a wonderful tribute to the public schools which sharpened the skills of the star players. Stuart Broad, who took six prime wickets for only 17 runs on that tumultuous third day, reducing South Africa's second innings to rubble, was educated at Oakham. Joe Root, who scored a superb century to set up the bowlers, was a sixth-former at Worksop College. Jonny Bairstow, who held nine catches in the match behind the stumps, attended St Peter's York, and James 'Titch' Taylor, who held two remarkable catches at short leg, went to Shrewsbury.

Cook, who has made more Test runs for England than anybody, and who has now led England to victory in South Africa as well as India, spent his schooldays at Bedford. Poor old Nick Compton had to make do with Harrow, 'the dump on the hump'. And there to report on proceedings was the BBC cricket correspondent, Jonathan Agnew, an Uppingham old boy, supported by the ever-green 'Blowers', Henry Calthorpe Blofeld, who polished his vowels at Eton.

Nor does the public-school influence end at the boundary ropes. Andrew Strauss, Cook's predecessor as captain, was appointed director of cricket by the England and Wales Cricket Board last year, and Strauss is a Radley man. As the Oxfordshire school also educated the great Ted Dexter ('Lord Ted') 60 years ago, they have certainly done their bit for the summer game.

English cricket has been adorned, if not completely dominated, by public schoolboys for as long as batsmen have faced bowlers. C.B. Fry, the finest all-round sportsman this country has produced, went to Repton before Oxford University. The Albanians offered Fry the crown of their kingdom but he refused it, saying it was 'a damn bore'.

Mind you, he went on, 'had I accepted it, the Italian invasion would never have happened. There would have been county cricket, and nobody would have dared to invade Albania with county cricket being played. The Royal Navy would have been obliged to intervene!'

Douglas Jardine, the England captain whose 'bodyline' strategy (vicious fast and short bowling) in Australia in 1932-33 almost led to a diplomatic breach between the countries, learned his cricket at Winchester. After the war the finest batsmen continued to come: Peter May (Charterhouse), Colin Cowdrey (Tonbridge), M.J.K. Smith (Stam-

*Football and rugby are easy work.  
All you need are two lots of shirts  
and a teacher with a whistle*

ford), and David Gower (King's, Canterbury). Of recent captains Michael Atherton was a bright boy at Manchester Grammar School, and Nasser Hussain went to Forest School in east London. Mike Brearley, wide-

ly considered to be the finest captain of all, passed through City of London School on his way, like Atherton, to Cambridge.

Does all this matter? My word, it does, more than ever. In state schools cricket has more or less disappeared. The game is expensive to play, with all the clobber that participants need, and it takes up more hours than any other sport. Football and rugby are easy work. All you need are two lots of shirts and a teacher with a whistle. Cricket requires far more dedication from schoolmasters and the lads (and, increasingly, girls) who play the sport.

The public schools, with their long-rooted traditions (not least in fixtures against other top schools) and superb playing fields, have a head start in all respects. Many of them also offer sports scholarships to the most gifted boys, which is how Root, who is blossoming day by day into a cricketer of exceptional skill, got his chance. You might say that the victory in Jo'burg was established on the playing fields of Worksop — and Oakham.

These schools have another advantage. Many leading cricketers, including those who played Test cricket, are recruited as 'pros', coaching the boys during the summer term and casting a kindly eye upon their progress. Cook, for instance, was coached at Bedford by Derek Randall, once of Nottinghamshire and England. Phillip DeFreitas is the current pro at Magdalen College School, Oxford, and John Lever is at Bancroft's.

Meanwhile, in the state sector, King Football reigns supreme. Even though we are not much cop at football as a country, compared with Germany or Italy, the game is more popular than ever, or at least more visible. Cricket, once unquestionably the other major national sport, has been pushed to the margins. Club cricket, once so strong in places like Lancashire and Yorkshire, has also declined. There is a widespread struggle to put out teams, and some clubs have gone out of business.

The lack of coverage on terrestrial television has played the most important part in this process of marginalisation. However skilfully Sky cover the game, Atherton and Hussain to the fore, a generation of young people have grown up with cricket playing little or no part in their sporting lives. As newspapers no longer report the first-class game in depth, preferring to throw all their eggs into the basket of Test cricket, there has been a rupture with the past. It is now noticeable that many spectators who attend Test matches have a sketchy knowledge of the game and those who play it.

So the public schools which have contributed so mightily to English cricket's past are now entrusted with the responsibility of finding players for the future. It is a burden these great institutions will shoulder manfully. It is also a sad reflection on our national sporting life.

## FROM THE ARCHIVE

### Bad driving

*From 'The Conscription of Wealth', The Spectator, 22 January 1916: At recent race meetings streams of motor-cars have proceeded from London carrying down persons engaged solely in the pursuit of their own amusement, wasting petrol, wasting the labour of chauffeurs, and diverting in hundreds of detailed ways energy which ought to have been devoted to the carrying on of the war. A heavy tax on petrol and heavier duties on motor-cars, except where they are used for public work, would prevent this scandal. More generally, it is notorious that in all classes, with the possible exception of the very rich, the scale of expenditure is as high as, or higher than, before the war, and the only way of effectively dealing with the problem is to increase taxation heavily. Certainly the well-to-do classes will make no objection.*

# The Oscars have a disgracefully racist record



In 2017 it will be exactly 50 years since a dapper Sidney Poitier announced to Rod Steiger, in the excellent film *In The Heat of the Night*: ‘They call me Mr Tibbs!’ Rod Steiger, playing a somewhat right-of-centre sheriff of a small town in Mississippi had hitherto been disposed to refer to Poitier — a senior policeman on his way home to Philadelphia — as ‘boy’, if you recall. I say the film was excellent, but the plotting was flawed, convoluted and unconvincing. The pleasure was to be gained instead from decent dialogue, a very good soundtrack and, most of all, the terrific performances of its two central stars.

At the time it was regarded as a sort of breakthrough — how wonderful to see Hollywood confronting those hot issues of segregation and racism in the Deep South, as it never had done before! Other voices were more sceptical, thinking the southern states an easy and convenient target when there was plenty of racism, and consequent riots, in the supposedly civilised states north of the Mason-Dixon Line. One such sceptic was the magnificent Mr Steiger himself: ‘A very nice film and a very good film, and yes, I think it’s good to see a black man and a white man working together... but it’s not going to take the tension out of New York City. It’s not going to stop the riots in Chicago,’ he remarked.

Indeed, the Oscars committee the following year seemed wholly unmoved by the underlying message of the film. They lavished praise and awards upon it, for sure — there was a wholly deserved Academy Award for Steiger, as well as one each for the producer, the film editor, the screenplay writer and the bloke who did the sound. And nominations, but no award, for the director, Norman Jewison and the sound editor. Sidney Poitier did not even receive a nomination. Nor was the black musician Quincy Jones nominated for his brilliant soundtrack. Best soundtrack that year went to the god-awful *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. Quincy’s quickly tossed-off red-neck country parody, ‘Foul Owl on the Prowl’ alone was better than anything in *Millie*.

But it seems that not much has changed in 50 years, as far as the Academy Awards are concerned. In the first 50 years of the Academy Awards, beginning in 1929, only

two black American actors won Oscars — including Poitier for *Lilies of the Field*. Since then things have picked up, but only a little. There have been Academy Awards for a total of 11 black American actors in the last 37 years and only about 40 nominations. And in the last two years not a single black face has even been nominated.

You might begin to see, then, why black Americans are a little disdainful of the Academy Awards, or even angry. The director Spike Lee has announced that he will be boycotting the awards (yep, he missed out this year, as you might have guessed) and so too has the actress Jada Pinkett Smith (Will Smith’s missus). And of course the Reverend Al Sharpton has got in on the act, as you

*For the last two years, not a single black actor has been nominated to receive an Academy Award*

might imagine he would. He described the Academy Awards as being like the Rocky Mountains — always white at the top. It grieves me to say it, but perhaps for the first time, this perpetually thuggish Harlem agitator might have a decent point.

Lee, and others, have demanded that those who make the nominations be drawn from a slightly more diverse demographic: they are 94 per cent white and 86 per cent aged over 50. This brings us into troubled and swirling waters: for what reason would black Americans choose more black actors for nominations, other than a racial bias on their own part? In fact, the African American Film Critics Association has already named its best film of 2015: the

almost entirely black-casted *Straight Outta Compton*. Really, bro? It reminds me of that scene from *In The Heat of the Night* when a seething Poitier tells Steiger he wants to ‘bring down’ the racist white cotton farmer, bring him down at all costs, regardless of the evidence. ‘Why, you just the same as us,’ Steiger’s white sheriff replies with glee, as if the thought had never previously occurred.

From the political right there has been the usual caustic and spiteful rhetoric. Take this, from the blog ‘American Thinker’: ‘But Academy Awards aside, I also have to wonder if Spike Lee will boycott the Nobel Prize. After all, there has been exactly one black Nobel laureate in economics and exactly zero in sciences. If that isn’t racism, what is? And perhaps he will want to boycott the Democratic party, which has only one black senator and exactly zero black governors.’

And there is at least half a point to that nasty riposte. Acting is one of the few top professions where African-Americans actually do punch their weight, even if the rewards are not always forthcoming. That they do not do so in other top professions is perhaps partly a consequence of plain and simple discrimination, but partly also a culture which does not value academic achievement as much as it should. This may account for the almost total absence of African-Americans from the Academy Awards for work carried out behind the camera — the sound technicians, the editors, the directors (except for ol’ Spike, natch), the cameramen. That’s a societal problem, not a Hollywood problem.

Still, at least black Americans can console themselves that they are not alone in being shunned by the Academy Awards. Almost all of the top actors are likewise ignored, regardless of their race. The Oscars usually go to third-rate actors from huge-budget third-rate films. Those cretins who do the nominating are swayed by the glutinously sentimental, the overblown epic, the vacuously feelgood, the imbecilic right-on political values stapled to the banal glossy dross. There’s a case for saying African-Americans are best off out of it.



‘You are 27,345,004th in the queue, please hold.’

**SPECTATOR.CO.UK/RODLIDDLE**  
The argument continues online.



# High finance, low tricks

Michael Lewis, author of *The Big Short*, rages against greedy bankers, weak politicians and timid journalists

LIAM HALLIGAN

‘It amazes me, simply amazes me, that journalists aren’t all over these stories. Doesn’t it amaze you too?’

I’m in a plush room in a swanky central London hotel, in conversation with Michael Lewis. He is all fired up, leaning forward as he perches on the hard edge of the cushion-strewn sofa. He oozes incredulity, palms upward, shoulders raised.

‘I’m not saying there aren’t good financial journalists,’ he concedes. But the qualification seems half-hearted — and is quickly reversed. ‘The *Wall Street Journal* is a much worse newspaper than it was 20 years ago,’ he asserts, taking aim at the bible of US high finance. ‘The news side of the paper has the fingerprints of the finance industry all over it’.

Lewis broadens his critique to the media as a whole. ‘We are underserved by critical, knowledgeable financial journalists who don’t have any fear whatsoever of what their subjects think of them.’ He winces as he speaks, as if pained by his own words.

Michael Lewis is, by a long way, the most important financial writer alive today — not just in his native America, but worldwide. At a time when public confidence in Wall Street and the City is at rock-bottom, his views pack a mighty punch. Lewis is in London to talk about his 2010 bestseller, *The Big Short* — a penetrating account of the build-up of the western world’s housing and credit bubble during the 2000s. The Oscar-nominated film version of the book has its UK premiere this week.

Described by Reuters as ‘probably the best single piece of financial journalism ever written’, *The Big Short* analysed how the international banking system came off the rails, with devastating consequences for the global economy, due to the crass, immoral behaviour of those running some of the world’s biggest banks.

Well aware of the potential cultural and political impact of a Hollywood movie (‘a lot more powerful than a mere book’), Lewis states his views on the financial reforms since the 2008 financial crisis. ‘Not nearly enough has been done — the regulatory response has been totally inadequate,’ he says. ‘The big banks have blocked serious reforms, meddling in the process so incentives haven’t changed enough to attack the

heart of the problem — which is why it could happen again.’

Lewis wrote his first book, *Liar’s Poker*, in 1989 after a four-year stint as a fresh-from-the-Ivy-League New York bond dealer at the now defunct firm Salomon Brothers. A true insider’s account, it brilliantly lampooned the macho, aggressive behaviour of the ‘big swinging dicks’ who paced the carpet-tiled trading floors of Wall Street in



the go-go, testosterone-fuelled 1980s. It went from instant bestseller to modern classic.

He had another hit in 2003 with *Moneyball*, confirming his knack of conveying complex non-fiction subjects through crystal-clear writing and larger-than-life characters. Describing how major league baseball coaches were picking teams based on highly detailed performance data, eschewing traditional attributes like athleticism and character, *Moneyball* revealed how poorer teams were beating the big boys by buying cheaper yet more effective players. A riveting David versus Goliath tale, it led to a spin-off movie starring Brad Pitt.

But it was when he returned his gaze to Wall Street with *The Big Short* that Lewis transformed himself into the revered chronicler of contemporary America that he is today. At the heart of the story are four sets of Wall Street ‘outsiders’ — from an eccentric doctor turned hedge-fund manager with a glass eye, to a couple of college-aged

kids operating out of a parental garage who spotted the early warning signs of the US housing crash — signs everyone else wanted to ignore.

Set up as anti-heroes, they all took the audacious step of using complex financial instruments to bet against (or ‘short’) the market, pitching themselves against the banking titans of Wall Street. Until, that is, the big banks joined them, pulling the market down and the global economy with it, ruining millions of lives and livelihoods in the knowledge they’d ultimately be bailed out at taxpayers’ expense.

When he talks about this episode, Lewis shows real contempt for bankers and the politicians who have ‘utterly failed’ to regulate them. ‘We still have the same short-term-oriented compensation, the same big bonuses at year-end, as opposed to stakes in a firm that might become valuable if you build something over 20 or 30 years,’ he says. ‘Everyone is looking for quick kills — and people will find very crafty ways which, even if they’re not quite illegal, are just plain bad.’

Both the book and the film name names, aiming directly at some of America’s banking thoroughbreds. ‘I’ve never gotten over

*‘Everyone is looking for quick kills. People will find crafty ways which, if not quite illegal, are just plain bad’*

the feeling when I learnt Goldman Sachs had designed securities that would fail, so they could then short them,’ Lewis says. ‘It’s just shocking, like pollution in the system — yet it wasn’t, and still isn’t illegal.’

The 1997 repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act was ‘part of the problem’, he observes. Having long kept the savings of ordinary firms and households away from risky investment-banking activity, the removal of this Depression-era legislation by President Clinton, at the behest of various former and future bankers in his government, entrenched ‘too big to fail’ and put the broader economy at risk.

‘But it goes back even before that,’ says Lewis. ‘The earlier transformation of investment banks into public corporations was a big mistake — with bankers using shareholders’ money to bet, rather than their own.’

When asked why we haven't seen more meaningful reform, Lewis points to the 'massive' influence of the financial services industry over politicians and regulators, not least in the US.

'It isn't just the big campaign contributions,' he says. 'Anyone at the table talking about financial reform is a potential hire and likely to end up working in the financial sector for huge sums, so they get captured.'

Lewis becomes most animated when he talks about *Flashboys*, his 2014 book, yet to be made into a film. This contains the jaw-dropping revelation that so-called 'high-frequency' trading firms on Wall Street and elsewhere pay intermediaries to 'flash' early access to information signalling the trading intention of large underlying customers — often pension funds and insurance companies managing the money of ordinary savers.

This allows computer-driven trading robots to nip in and buy just ahead of the original purchaser (we're talking milliseconds), before selling the shares on to them at a slightly inflated price. Tiny gains on big volumes, of course, multiplied over many millions of trades daily, generate vast profits for the high-frequency firms — at the expense of everyone else. Maybe that's why this galling practice, despite Lewis's exposé, remains entirely legal.

'Why were *The Big Short* and *Flashboys* available to me to be written?' he asks. 'These stories should have been gobbled up by newspaper and magazine journalists.'

Lewis then draws a chilling parallel between the dilemmas facing regulators and financial writers. 'Journalists are often financially insecure, just as politicians and regulators are often financially insecure — and I'm talking about personally financially insecure,' he says. 'It seems journalists feel they have to, one way or another, accommodate the existing financial interests in their work — and that's wrong.'

Lewis also recounts that one group of financial innovators — featured in *Flashboys* — are trying to make US financial markets fairer by introducing a 'fibre-optic speed-bump' that levels out price transmission times, so foiling the high-frequency houses. Their efforts have so far met a barrage of obstructive regulation.

'The US stock market is now very clearly rigged in favour of high-frequency traders,' says Lewis. Not only has the SEC [the main US regulatory body] done nothing about the problems I discuss in *Flashboys*, it's also holding up the guys who are trying to solve those problems — and that's an outrage.'

We talk about the rising anger across the western world towards the financial elite, those winning handsomely from growing inequality, the so-called '1 per cent' — and, conversely, the sense of economic insecurity that is increasingly felt even among previously comfortable middle classes. 'You'd like to

think democracy could translate those signals into reform,' Lewis says. 'But the financial sector is very good at batting away reforms and anger ends up being expressed in other ways — such as Donald Trump.'

The controversial Trump — who has outraged liberal Americans by pledging to build a wall to discourage immigrants — won't get the Republican presidential nomination, predicts Lewis. 'People think he's a winner, yet his business record is very patchy,' he says, while highlighting that Trump's current electorate, Republican primary voters, 'make up only a tiny slice of the population'. As the pool of voters gets wider, and encompasses the broader US population, 'the less appeal Trump has'.

Conversations with Lewis, an intellectual omnivore, range widely. The European single currency 'can't last' and 'will eventually break up', in his view. When it comes to geopolitics, he points to a 'decline in American prestige' caused by the financial crisis. 'One day, when the history of this era is written, people will say financiers really cost my country — we've lost a lot of our ability to be a force for good because people don't trust us in the same way.'

So what does Michael Lewis think of the film version of *The Big Short*? 'I love the movie — Adam [McKay, the director] has seduced the audience with entertainment, so they watch something that would otherwise be hard to watch.'

A lot like Lewis's books, the film focuses on intriguing and amusing characters, whose actions point to a broader, more serious truth. 'There is laughter but it's not a comedy — more of a tragedy, really,' he observes.

I can confirm that the film is, as Lewis describes it, 'very funny'. But, as he also observes, 'humour is used as a weapon — you laugh, but at some point you stop laughing'.

So does he believe that this latest film adaptation of one of his books — which also stars Brad Pitt among its stellar cast — will generate such clamour for financial reform that it finally provokes the changes he so desperately wants?

'I don't think so,' Lewis says. 'The reality is that a major restructuring of the financial services industry will only ever happen if we get another really big crisis.'

Deborah Ross reviews *The Big Short*, p43.



'And this one even fires the person it's about to replace!'

## BAROMETER

### Roll out the barrel

The price of crude oil dropped below \$30 a barrel. Why do we measure it in barrels?

— A standard barrel for the purposes of measuring oil is 42 US gallons or 35 imperial gallons. This was the size of a 'tierce', a unit for measuring wine in medieval England.

— When demand for kerosene provoked an oil rush in Pennsylvania in 1859, producers were so desperate for vessels that they used all kinds of containers.

— In August 1866, however, producers met in the town of Titusville to agree on a standard measure. A 42-gallon barrel of oil weighed 300lb: just enough, it was found, for one man to manoeuvre on his own.

— The US Petroleum Producers Association adopted the 42-gallon barrel in 1872 and it has remained the standard measure ever since.

### Not speaking English

David Cameron promised free English lessons for Muslim women who can't speak English. How many people in England can't speak English?

In the 2011 census **7.7%** of the population said their main language was something other than English or Welsh.

**1.3%** 'cannot speak English very well'.

**0.3%** said they can't speak English at all.

The areas with the highest percentages who cannot speak English well are:

Newham	<b>8.7%</b>
Brent, Tower Hamlets	<b>8.0%</b>
Leicester	<b>7.5%</b>

### Gun trends

An extra 600 armed police officers are to be deployed in London. What is the trend in firearms use in England and Wales?

No. of police firearms operations	No. of authorised firearms officers
<b>23,181</b>	2008/09 <b>6,906</b>
<b>21,337</b>	2009/10 <b>6,976</b>
<b>19,619</b>	2010/11 <b>6,653</b>
<b>16,857</b>	2011/12 <b>6,756</b>
<b>15,454</b>	2012/13 <b>6,092</b>
<b>14,864</b>	2013/14 <b>5,875</b>

Source: Home Office

### Furnishing limits

The head of sustainability for Ikea said we have reached 'peak home furnishings'.

How has the market for home furnishing been going?

Average weekly sales

November 2011	<b>£221,395</b>
November 2012	<b>£224,509</b>
November 2013	<b>£228,222</b>
November 2014	<b>£261,053</b>
November 2015	<b>£275,526</b>

Source: ONS

# Rise of the Norland nanny

Edwardian childcare has been updated, and the oligarchs can't get enough

LARA PRENDERGAST

The young nannies arriving for their morning lectures at Norland College in Bath make quite a sight. Although the road is empty, they bank up along the pavement waiting for the lights to change. They are in their winter uniform of brown hat and gloves, hair in a neat bun; some push old-fashioned Silver Cross prams with plastic babies in them. Eventually the green man appears and the nannies cross.

These girls look as if they are being trained for a bygone era — and that is certainly part of their appeal — but they are well prepared for modern life. Founded in London in 1892, Norland College made its name providing nannies for British aristocrats and royals. Back then, a nanny might have stayed with a family over a lifetime, but these days it's a career, not a vocation, so it's normal to move on every few years. As a result, the new nannies are a different breed: ambitious, smart, middle-class. Often they've picked Norland over university — and given how many job opportunities the qualification provides, and how much you can earn, it can be a shrewd move. Moreover, a new type of employer now requires their services: the international elite. Much like British public schools, Norland nannies have become popular with rich foreigners who are desperate to do — and pay — whatever it takes to look the part.

The Edwardian-looking college uniform has been slightly redesigned to make it more practical, with the waistlines brought in to look more attractive. The girls are constantly reminded that they are neither au pairs nor lowly servants, but something more noble. Where once some of them might have been brought up by a Norland nanny themselves, others see it as a fast track to the high life, the modern equivalent of becoming an air hostess. When in uniform they are expected to be on best behaviour, which for the most part they are — although when I visited the college last month I noticed a few Norlanders secretly shopping for Kim Kardashian-style dresses on their laptops during a seminar.

The girls spend three years on a mixture of practical sessions, lectures and placements. Extracurricular activities include a polo team and a choir. Robotic babies, which cry throughout the night, are used to simulate nursery life. Advice is given on everything from nit removal and baby baths to stopping

children discovering videos of Jihadi John. The code of conduct also includes guidance on how nannies should themselves use social media, following a pretty tame tabloid story about Norland nannies going 'wild' during their time off, wearing skimpy outfits and drinking vodka. 'The best cure for a hang-over is to drink a banana milkshake,' tweeted one girl at the time; exactly the kind of sensible advice you would expect from a Norlander.

In 1972, Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy published *The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny*, an elegy to 'a unique and curious way of bringing up children, which vanished for ever after the second world war'. Most colleges that trained nannies died out, but Norland clung on. When a new wealthy elite

*The agency does warn parents that a uniformed nanny puts the children at greater risk of being kidnapped*

arrived in Britain, business picked up. Job opportunities from all round the world are now available via Norland's agency, and the girls are advised to choose what seems the most appealing. For some, it's a big house in Kensington. For others, a life of exotic travel. Today's Norland nanny now has the world's wealthiest families clamouring to employ her, offering all kinds of perks — and what's two weeks' holiday in Cornwall each year compared with a private jet and houses on every continent?

In job adverts, nannies advertise their skills. Take this recent one: 'Norland nanny able to ski, ride and sail who can teach the children to do the same. Experienced with wheat, gluten and dairy allergies.' What more could today's discerning parent ask for? The agency always has more jobs to

fill than nannies available, so the interview process works both ways. If you want an affordable Norlander, go for a 'Newly Qualified Nanny', available for a modest salary of around £27,000 a year and barred from working abroad. This cuts out the foreign competition, so clued-up British parents who might struggle to afford a more experienced Norlander try to secure an NQN. Later, foreign placements can command a higher salary, with six figures not unheard of.

In days gone by, Norland nannies were prized by the English upper crust, who appreciated both their expertise and absolute discretion. So, too, do the new elite. 'You might see what type of pyjamas your employer wears,' warned one Norlander, but given the nature of the work they can expect to see all kinds of dirty laundry, both literal and metaphorical. A rogue nanny can be a disaster; Nigella Lawson found that out when one of hers testified against her in court. Wendi Deng's leaked to the press that Rupert Murdoch's household was a 'war zone'. Neither of the nannies involved were Norlanders — if stories like these were ever linked to the college, they could sink it.

The agency knows this, so they keep things tight. If nannies need advice, they should consult Norland. It's a clever model: via the agency, nannies have access to some of the most lucrative childcare jobs available. But it works both ways, and I imagine the agency gives short shrift to nannies who put the establishment's reputation at risk. Sleeping with the children's father is probably not a gamble worth taking if it means future work via the agency starts to dry up.

Nannies are expected to wear the uniform only if their employer demands it. This is unusual with British families, although more common with international employers who are keen to flaunt their Norlander. The agency does warn parents, though, that a uniformed nanny puts the children at greater risk of being kidnapped. Not that the nannies aren't prepared for this: their training now includes lessons in self-defence and getaway driving.

While the college has a Christian foundation — evident in their motto 'Love Never Faileth' — Norlanders are taught to 'respect all spiritual beliefs'. They are so popular in the Middle East that Etihad airlines now offers Norland-approved 'flying nannies' on some of its routes. Small wonder sheikhs and oligarchs have succumbed to their charms.

There are still a few things that Britain is thought to do better than anyone else in the world. Nannies are one, and have become yet another service this country exports to a global plutocracy. The challenge Norland faces is how to appeal to international clients while not appearing gauche to a British audience. Easier said than done. But for the time being, Norland is still a respected institution — and savvy young women are capitalising on it.





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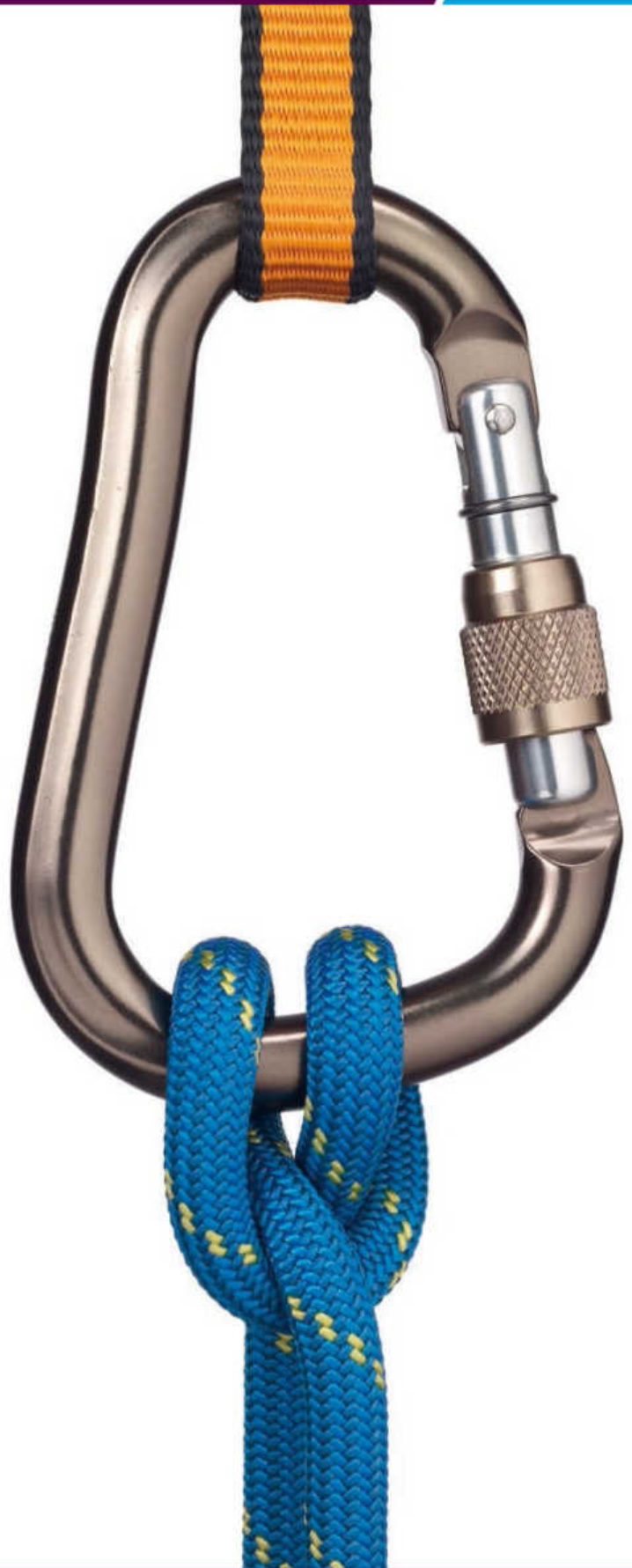
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# What Brexit looks like

Life outside the EU would be good for Britain

DANIEL HANNAN

‘So what’s your alternative?’ demand Euro-enthusiasts. ‘D’you want Britain to be like Norway? Or like Switzerland? Making cuckoo clocks? Is that what you want? Is it? Eh?’

The alternative to remaining in a structurally unsafe building is, of course, walking out; but I accept that this won’t quite do as an answer. Although staying in the EU is a greater risk than leaving — the migration and euro crises are deepening, and Britain is being dragged into them — change-aversion is deep in our genome, and we vote accordingly. Europhiles know that most referendums go the way of the status quo, which is why their campaign is based around conjuring inchoate fears of change.

What is the alternative? Well, all the options involve remaining part of the European free-trade zone that stretches from non-EU Iceland to non-EU Turkey. No one in Brussels argues that Britain would leave that common market if it left the EU. Nor, in fairness, do Remainers. Instead, they talk about jobs being ‘dependent on our trade with the EU’, hoping that at least some voters will hear that line as ‘dependent on our membership of the EU’.

So when every non-EU territory from the Isle of Man to Montenegro has access to the European free trade area, which model should we follow? The nations arguably most comparable to Britain, being neither micro-states nor ex-communist countries, are Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. All three prefer their current deal to ours: 60 per cent of Icelanders, 79 per cent of Norwegians and 82 per cent of Swiss oppose EU membership. Who can blame them? Norway and Switzerland are the wealthiest and second-wealthiest nations on Earth.

Norway is a member of the European Economic Area (EEA); Switzerland is in EFTA. The EEA was established in 1992 as a waiting room for the EU. It contains what was originally envisaged as a transitional mechanism for the adoption of EU legislation — the ‘fax democracy’ which Europhiles like to bang on about.

Never mind the archaic metaphor: Little Europeans are nostalgists at heart. The charge is that Norway has no vote in some EU regulations that it later enforces. But this is more a problem in theory than in practice.

According to the EFTA Secretariat, the EU generated 52,183 legal instruments between 2000 and 2013, of which Norway adopted 4,724 — 9 per cent. A written answer to a parliamentary question in Iceland found a similar proportion: 6,326 out of 62,809 EU legal acts between 1994 and 2014. Yet rather than use the official statistics, Europhiles have seized on a remark by a Eurofanatical Norwegian minister to the effect that ‘three quarters of our laws’ come from Brussels, and have solemnly translated that throwaway line into an official-sounding ‘75 per cent’.

In Switzerland, there is no ambiguity: the figure is zero per cent. The Swiss sometimes copy EU regulations for reasons of economy of scale, though more often both Switzerland and the EU are adopting global rules. But though Swiss exporters must meet EU standards when selling to the EU (just as they must meet Japanese standards when selling to Japan), they generally don’t apply those standards to their domestic economy. Britain, by contrast, must apply 100 per cent of EU regulations to 100 per cent of its economy.

Switzerland is not a full participant in the single market in services. This doesn’t mean, obviously, that UBS can’t operate in Frankfurt, but it does mean that Swiss financial institutions are not part of the same regulatory structure as those in the EU. If they want to trade there, they must adopt different rules. The flipside, of course, is that Zurich doesn’t need to worry about the expensive and sometimes downright malicious EU regulations that menace London: the Alternative Investment Fund Managers Directive, the short-selling ban, the bonus cap, the Financial Transactions Tax.

Now here’s the clinching statistic. The EU takes 64 per cent of Swiss exports, as opposed

to 45 per cent of British exports. Europhiles like to claim that ‘around’ half of our exports go to the EU, but that figure has fallen by 10 per cent since 2006. How much lower must it go before we drop the idea that we need to merge our political institutions?

To summarise, then, Norway gets a better deal than Britain currently does, and Switzerland a better deal than Norway. But a post-EU Britain, with 65 million people to Switzerland’s eight million and Norway’s five, should expect something better yet.

The deal on offer is based on free trade and intergovernmental co-operation. We’ll recover our parliamentary sovereignty and, with it, the ability to sign bilateral trade deals with non-EU countries, as Norway and Switzerland do — an increasingly important advantage when every continent in the world is growing except Antarctica and Europe. We’d obviously remain outside Schengen.

Would we have to pay a participation fee? According to Professor Herman Matthijs of the Free University of Brussels, who has produced the only like-with-like comparator, Iceland’s annual per capita contribution is €50, Switzerland’s €68 and Norway’s €107 — largely because Norway insists on opting into lots of EU aid and research projects. Iceland, though it has precisely the same treaty terms, chooses to participate in fewer common activities and so pays less. The United Kingdom’s current per capita annual payment, by the same methodology, is €229.

Why should the other member states allow Britain such a deal? Because it would be in everyone’s interest. The UK runs a structural deficit with the EU, only partly offset by its surplus with the rest of the world. On the day we left, we would immediately become the EU’s biggest export market. The idea that either side would wish to jeopardise the flow of cross-Channel trade is bizarre. And, in any case, it is remarkably difficult, under WTO rules, to apply a trade barrier where you previously didn’t have one.

Many European federalists actively campaign for Britain to be given an economics-only relationship — what Jacques Delors calls ‘privileged partnership’ and Guy Verhofstadt ‘associate membership’. It would allow them to push ahead with a European army, a common tax system and so on, while Britain led an outer tier of some 20 European states and territories, part of a common market but not a common government.

‘Iceland is much better off outside the EU,’ says prime minister Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson. ‘Unemployment is minimal, purchasing power has never been higher, and we have control over our own legal framework, currency and natural resources.’

Iceland has 300,000 people. Britain is the fifth largest economy in the world, the fourth military power, a leading member of the G7 and one of five permanent seat-holders on the UN Security Council. I think we might just about scrape by.



*‘I’m looking for a hook-up.’*

# ISRAEL NOTEBOOK

Anne Applebaum

Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Croatia, Morocco: if I had picked anywhere else on the Mediterranean for a family holiday, at least anywhere that's not convulsed by civil war, I don't think anyone would have noticed. But when I told friends that we were taking our children to Israel on vacation, I got some odd looks. Was there a special reason, someone wanted to know. Were we in search of political insight, asked another. Perhaps one of us was interested in finding his or her Jewish roots, an acquaintance suggested. Perhaps one of us was 'searching', spiritually speaking, and would like to walk in the steps of Jesus. Nobody seemed able to believe that we just... went to Israel, on Wizzair, in search of winter sunshine.

But that wasn't the end of it. 'What is the purpose of your visit to Israel?' Upon arriving in Tel Aviv we were stopped, as everyone is, and asked to explain ourselves. When we mumbled something about tourism and showed our various passports — between the four of us we have two surnames, three nationalities (Polish, US, UK), various combinations of dual citizenship — we got more questions. Nobody just... goes to Israel. What was our real goal? Only when my husband produced the name of an Israeli acquaintance — a man who jumped off a train heading for Treblinka 75 years ago and joined the Polish underground — did the point of our trip seem to make sense: Ah, a connection to history, to tragedy, to heroism. We were waved ahead.

To be fair, the Israelis have good reason to assume that visitors will be 'searching,' whether for salvation or glory, because so many have in the past. We had lunch in Haifa's 'German



colony,' built by Protestants who came to the Holy Land in the 19th century to await the Second Coming. We had dinner nearby in Zichron Yaakov, built at about the same time by Baron Edmond de Rothschild, to realize his utopian vision of a Jewish national home. Just up the coast we visited Acre, an earlier incarnation of which was built by, among others, the Order of the Brothers of the German House of Saint Mary, otherwise known as the Teutonic Knights. Conquered by King Baldwin I of Jerusalem in 1104, Acre once produced more revenue for the Crusader coffers than the entire kingdom of England. After it fell, the Mameluks burned it, on the grounds that this would keep the Christians from coming back.

But they did. In 1917, the British arrived with what seemed a pragmatic agenda — to tidy up the place and divide the whole region into proper modern countries — but that proved utopian too. Wanting to keep things simple, a British bureaucrat named Sykes declared that he would like to draw a straight line from the 'e in Acre to the k in Kirkuk'. That unfortunate straight line, crafted together with Monsieur Picot of the Quai d'Orsay, divided the French mandate from the British and eventually gave birth to a series of untenable borders and unviable states which are being violently disputed even as you are reading this article. From the top of the Golan Heights, a mere 40 miles from Damascus, I could

hear the echoes of distant artillery fire only last week.

But if the locals suffer from a long tradition of over-enthusiastic visitors, so do the visitors. 'Jerusalem Syndrome', a malady caused by proximity to the birthplace of three great religions, is one result: sufferers begin to believe that they are, in fact, the messiah. 'Tour Guide

Syndrome', is another: sufferers begin to feel that they cannot possibly bear to hear one more lecture about the Arab-Israeli dispute, pro or con. I don't know how to cure the former. But the latter can be alleviated by the polenta with truffle oil and porcini at Machneyuda, the fashionably noisy restaurant near Jerusalem's spectacular spice and vegetable market. Israeli craft beer helps.

So does Israeli wine, though one has to be careful. The very expression 'kosher wine' has the same effect on me as the sound of someone scratching their fingernails along a chalkboard, so negative are my childhood memories of that sickly sweet beverage. Fortunately, there is now an alternative. Once upon a time, wine had to be boiled in order to be considered kosher, hence the revolting result. But nowadays, according to an Orthodox vintner who explained this at great length, wine merely has to be made by people who are observant, or anyway observant enough to win the local rabbi's approval, in order to get a kosher label. I have no idea if that's what the scriptures say, but in any case there is quite a lot of good wine to be had in Israel, both kosher and unkosher. And if you drink enough of it, then your millenarian vision will seem far, far less urgent.

Anne Applebaum is a contributing editor of *The Spectator*.



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# Rhodes's statue should remain, on one condition



**L**obengula was the second king of the Matabele people in what is now Zimbabwe. He was also the last. Cecil John Rhodes smashed his authority, and broke his tribe.

The Matabele (a breakaway people from the Zulu kingdom to the south) had been making their way north, and by the time Rhodes arrived on the scene were in effective control of a vast area of southern Africa, stretching from the Limpopo river to the Zambezi. Matabeleland was rich in minerals and the tribe were being pestered by white prospectors. Rhodes saw his opportunity. He made an ally of Lobengula, who had been king since 1869, and in 1888 persuaded him to grant Rhodes's emissaries an exclusive deal known as the Rudd Concession.

Lobengula could not read or write and key parts of the understanding were verbal, but I've never heard it seriously disputed — even in the unwaveringly pro-Rhodes version of history I absorbed during my Rhodesian boyhood — that Rhodes tricked Lobengula. As a king, he admired and trusted the dynamic white man in whom he recognised the qualities of leadership. For £100 per month, a steam boat, and one thousand rifles plus ammunition, Lobengula believed he was selling the mineral rights to his territory. He didn't realise Rhodes intended to occupy it. Rhodes himself described the concession as 'so gigantic it is like giving a man the whole of Australia'.

Within a year Rhodes had attained a charter for his company so that legally he was unassailable the eyes of a (suspicious) British government. Soon prospectors — and settlers, and a police force — moved in, on Rhodes's orders. The maxim gun followed. The Matabele rebelled in 1893. They were utterly defeated. Lobengula, deceived into selling his people for a mess of potage, had fled. He died a few months later of an imported disease, smallpox.

I recall, even among the hardened white supremacists among whom I grew up, an embarrassment about Lobengula's fate. I should like to have known him. Witty, sharp and 'every inch a king', according to those who did, he comes across as having a generosity of spirit that was his undoing. 'Did you ever see a chameleon catch a fly?' he asked,

towards the end of his life. 'The chameleon gets behind the fly and remains motionless for some time, then he advances very slowly and gently, first putting forward one leg and then another. At last, when well within reach, he darts out his tongue and the fly disappears. England is the chameleon and I am that fly.'

I admire Rhodes tremendously, I admire his achievements, and I'd argue that what is now Zimbabwe is the better for his life and work. His racism was routine for his era and he was not unusually cruel, so I would not blame him for his racial attitudes, but the fact is that he was — as London very well knew — an unscrupulous chancer. Rhodes was a dreamer, an achiever and a rascal.

*I'm afraid we regularly debase or destroy monuments to individuals who it has been decided were bad eggs*

I've been observing with a certain doubtfulness the high horses on which both sides in the dispute over the future of Rhodes's statue at Oriel College seem to be riding. I wouldn't dream of removing it, but that's partly because I admire the man. The argument used against Oxford students campaigning against the statue appears to be that 'you can't rewrite history'. This argument is way too strong. I don't remember hearing it from Tory friends when a Baghdad mob was toppling the statue of Saddam Hussein in 2003. I cannot call to mind protests from *Times* and *Telegraph* readers as statues of V.I. Lenin came down all across the former Soviet bloc.

I'm afraid that we do regularly decry, debase or destroy monuments to individuals who history has subsequently decided

were bad eggs. Personally I'd leave in place the many statues erected to General Franco in Spain, and retain the names of the many town squares named after him — but I do understand the feelings of those millions who think otherwise.

So here's a modest proposed compromise. How about a statue of the great Matabele king, Lobengula, somewhere at Oriel where he and Rhodes can see each other? There is, you see, no danger of important figures from our western European history being forgotten, but Lobengula, whose name was once familiar to British newspaper readers, is now almost completely forgotten — even by a younger African generation in Zimbabwe.

The deposed Matabele king was, when the white man crossed the Limpopo from the south, in the process of subjugating and dispossessing by force the other tribe inhabiting those lands: the Mashona, an unwarlike and pastoral people who were not united by an imperial hierarchy as the Matabele were, and were no match for Lobengula's fearsome warriors. Robert Mugabe and his Zanu-PF party are essentially a Mashona political movement, regaining after a century their regional hegemony — and there's more than a hint of that in modern Zimbabwean politics. The Matabele have not (to put it delicately) been favoured by the government in Harare.

So here's my quid pro quo for Lobengula's rejoining Rhodes at an Oxford college. Rhodes's body lies beneath a simple plaque in a rock grave in the beautiful granite Matobo hills south of Bulawayo ('Bulawayo' means 'place of slaughter' in Ndebele, the language of the Matabele). I think that, when he dies, Mugabe should take his place beside Rhodes in that serene and moving spot.

They were both great leaders, as was Lobengula. All three did terrible things. All three did great things. All three changed history. All three are among the architects of modern Africa north of the Limpopo. All three were prisoners of their era and circumstances, as we all are. Yet all three transcended their time to some degree. Their spirits will always walk the African bush.

Do we have to judge all the time? Could we not just acknowledge?

There, now I'll have annoyed both sides.



*'We razed the university to the ground, just to be on the safe side.'*



# Corbynglish as a second language: a political dictionary of terms



**Corbynterpretation [n]:** The inevitable process of debate, after Jeremy Corbyn is interviewed, over what he actually meant. Does the Labour leader believe the killing of Osama bin Laden was a tragedy, or not believe this? Would he like Britain to negotiate with Daesh or would he be opposed to that happening? Would he, or would he not, abandon the Falkland Islands? As in, 'Well, that's a matter of Corbynterpretation' or, 'No, no, those remarks have been totally misCorbynterpreted.'

In order to **Corbynterpret [v]** one must first consider 1. Whether the Labour leader brought up the disputed view himself (invariably not) 2. Whether the Labour leader clearly said 'yes' after somebody asked him whether he held this view (invariably not) and 3. Whether the Labour leader clearly said 'no' after somebody asked him if he held this view (invariably not). Thereafter, you'll just have to wing it. These are debates which can be neither won nor lost.

**Corbynsinuation [n]:** What Corbynsurgents (see below) believe that the biased right-wing corporate media (which includes the BBC, the *Guardian* and the *Morning Star*) are doing when they engage in the above. As in, 'In suggesting that Jeremy might have here been expressing precisely the sort of view he's expressed a million times before, Andrew Marr was guilty of blatant Corbynsinuation.'

**Corbyference [n]:** What this biased right-wing media believes it is drawing in the above situations. Note: not to be confused with the similar-sounding **Corbynterference [n]**, which is actually the quite different process of answering all foreign policy critiques by mentioning Saudi Arabia or China or possibly the Iraq war.

**Corbyncoherence [n]:** Why all this happens with Jeremy Corbyn, and not really with any other politician alive. Thanks to his ability to speak with peerless Corbyncoherence, the Labour leader can simultaneously enable his critics to think he has said something utterly astonishing, and his defenders to

firmly believe he has not. Opinion is divided as to whether this is a deliberate strategy, or something he does **Corbynvoluntarily [adj]**.

**Corbyncredulity [n]:** The sensation felt by moderate members of the Labour party when witnessing one of the above interviews. Diminishes over time.

**Corbyncognito [n]:** What a Labour MP does when he or she opts, for careerist reasons, to neither support nor oppose Jeremy Corbyn. As in, 'I keep telling Chuka he should go Corbyncognito before it's too late' or 'No, Tom Watson won't say anything; he's been Corbyncognito for ages.'

*Corbynsomnia [n]: Lying awake feeling Corbynsecure about what the Corbynsurgents will do to you*

**Corbynvisible [adj]:** An extreme form of going Corbyncognito. As in, 'Andy Burnham is now Corbynvisible.'

**Corbynterrogation [n]:** Conversation you have with Jeremy Corbyn during a reshuffle. Lasts ages and doesn't really get anywhere.

**Corbynquisition [n]:** Shadowy Labour organisation on a mission to root out secret Tories, if possible by hurling them in ponds and seeing if they drown. Otherwise known as Momentum.

**Corbynsurgents [n]:** Militant supporters of the current Labour leadership. See also Corbynterns (young) and the Corbyntelligentsia (normally the Hampstead branch).



'Is this something to do with Corbyn?'

**Corbynvasion [n]:** The process by which the above are taking over the Labour party. See also **Corbynfestation [n]**, although some reckon that's pejorative.

**Corbyntifada [n]:** The expected forthcoming bloodthirsty purge of all centre-left Labour candidates who haven't gone Corbyncognito enough. As in, 'Stella Creasy's back will be against the wall, come the Corbyntifada.'

**Corbynsecure [adj]:** How you feel as a Labour MP when you simply don't know if this is going to happen to you.

**Corbynsomnia [n]:** What you suffer from when lying awake all night feeling Corbynsecure about what the Corbynsurgents will do to you in the Corbyntifada.

**Corbynertia [n]:** Dogged resolve. As in, 'But his views haven't changed since 1983! You almost have to admire his Corbynertia.'

**Corbynfamy [n]:** Like infamy but less severe, solely because of proximity to Jeremy Corbyn. For example, in any other scenario, John McDonnell's history of support for the IRA, including jokes about kneecapping, might be expected to 'live on in infamy'. As it is, though, they only have to 'live on in Corbynfamy'. This isn't nearly so bad.

**Corbynternationalism [n]:** A vague sense that Russia and Iran are probably on the right track, or at least more so than we are.

**Corbyncidence [n]:** What happens when the Labour leader thinks what he always thinks, but by a sheer quirk of fate finds his view shared on the opposite side of the political spectrum. As in, 'Of course, him and Simon Jenkins agree on Trident, but that's a complete Corbyncidence.'

**Corbyneffable [adj]:** Mysterious. As in, 'Ours is not to understand his Corbyneffable ways.'

**Corbynsanity [n]:** What the Labour party is currently suffering from an outbreak of.

**Sheer Corbyndifference [n]:** The instinctive approach of the Great British public to all of the above.

Hugo Rifkind is a writer for the Times.



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## Bureaucratic tyranny

Sir: As James Forsyth points out ('Scary Monsters', 16 January), David Cameron and other 'In' campaign supporters wish voters to base their decision on the short term, as this enables them to highlight the uncertainty and fear factor. But this vote is about the long term, and in 20 years' time one thing is certain: the 'ever-closer union', and all that it means, will exist. What I don't understand, and what I hope every interviewer will force him to explain, is why David Cameron believes it will be better for Britain to be increasingly ruled by the bureaucratic tyranny that is the EU.

*Robin Grist  
Corton, Wiltshire*

## Doctors of madness

Sir: As a right-leaning junior doctor, I agree that the NHS needs reform (Leading article, 16 January). Most GP practices are in fact private businesses and there is no reason why hospitals could not also be independent 'for profit' or 'not for profit' organisations with government contracts.

But I strongly believe the strikes are necessary. Official statistics are often fudged. From a local survey, it was clear that most junior doctors work at least 10 per cent more hours than we are contracted to each week, which is not officially recorded. Most of us work more hours than is allowed by the European Working Time Directive. Then most of us go home to spend our 'free time' studying for postgraduate exams, preparing lessons for medical students and working on research projects. To suggest we should work even more antisocial hours for less pay than now is madness, and if this version of the new contract is enforced, it will lead to a brain drain from the NHS.

*Dr Jake Matthews  
Birmingham*

## Counties count

Sir: It might help Labour to win more votes in the West Country if possible future cabinet ministers (Tristram Hunt's Diary, 16 January) realise that Crewkerne is in Somerset and not Dorset.

*Julian Bunkall  
Buckland Newton, Dorset*

## Natural instincts

Sir: What exactly does James Delingpole wish to see on TV nature programmes? ('Nature is red in tooth and claw', 16 January.) *Springwatch* has shown a male swallow ejecting chicks from its nest, barn owl chicks devouring the smallest, a badger

swimming over to nesting avocets and eating all of the youngsters. True, it also has sentimental features, but the show is aimed at all age groups, from children to oldies, and if it simply showed the worst aspects of 'survival of the fittest', I and most others would not be able to stomach it.

I know many naturalists including Chris Packham, and can assure you that all of us know how brutal nature can be. Chris feels strongly that we must protect all species, whether we like them or not. He has written that the humble bee is more important to the environment than the giant panda, yet we devote millions to protecting the latter.

Actually, TV is obsessed with predators, and if anything we see too much. But perhaps we could learn from this, because in many ways we are the same. We are envious, greedy, territorial, tribal, sexual, jealous. We kill for pleasure, with destructive weapons unavailable to animals. And we cage millions of animals so they endure a life not worth living before slaughter. But we are sentient, so we can know right from wrong and, if we wish, use our willpower to override our primeval instincts.

*Ian Julian  
Bournemouth*

## Setting Larry straight

Sir: Julie Burchill's piece ('Brighton's gone Brideshead', 16 January) is unforgivable. She writes: 'Even our most famous peer — Lord Olivier of Brighton — was a bisexual actor married to an insane nymphomaniac, hardly the stuff of DeBrett's.' My father was not at all homosexual. I corrected this in my autobiography and Philip Ziegler agreed, writing in his excellent biography *Olivier* that there was no evidence whatsoever that Larry was homosexual. He lived a happy family life in Brighton with his third wife Joan, now Dame Joan, Plowright.

To dismiss Vivien Leigh, his second wife, as an insane nymphomaniac is also wrong. She suffered phases of manic depression. When herself, she was our greatest film star, a leading theatre actress ranging from comedy to great tragedy, and the most life-giving hostess and friend.

*Tarquin Olivier  
London W8*

## Cyborg, heal thyself

Sir: Clearly, those who are to be ousted by machines ('I, robot. You, unemployed', 16 January) should be training urgently in robot research, repair and maintenance. Or will that be undertaken by robots as well?

*Dr Ian Olson  
Aberdeen*

## It's an ill wind...

Sir: The immortal lines 'Where ere thou be, Let the wind blow free' are most unfairly attributed by Frank Debenham to the Scots alone ('The art of belching', Letters, 16 January). I inherited them from my Midlands father-in-law.

One of the early accomplishments of a new cathedral chorister in the mid-1950s was to learn the art of lower muscular control. When the whisper passed along the ancient stalls in mid-psalm that 'someone's let off', all eyes turned to the most junior boys, since all their seniors would have been assumed long since to have mastered the art. It was helpful training which proved useful in later life.

But it is a very great comfort in retirement that after a lifetime's sometimes painful control, and after a career dominated by the careful manipulation of the posterior in meetings with the great and the good, I can now relax.

I am grateful in old age to be surrounded by an understanding family, who stand by at not infrequent intervals to sing out: 'Where ere thou be...'

*Bill Proctor  
Chislehurst, Kent*

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# Come back Pesto, all is forgiven: and tell us who's to blame this time



**W**ho's to blame for financial crisis' is a poem I wrote in 2012, rhyming 'speculators, spivs and traders' with 'rich, uncaring hedge-fund raiders', while taking passing swipes at Gordon Brown and 'Mervyn King, who really didn't do a thing'. But it's too early in 2016 to update my ditty, because the new crisis — if that's what it is — hasn't really hit us yet, except in share prices that clearly have further to fall. And the question of who's to blame, never mind how to make them rhyme, is going to be a lot more difficult this time round.

'It's China's fault,' was the gist of bulletins about the loss of 750 jobs at Tata's Port Talbot steelworks this week. Dumping of cheap Chinese steel on world markets, combined with falling Chinese domestic demand, has turned the rump of the UK steel industry from a marginal survivor with marketable specialist skills into what looks increasingly like a basket case which no government action could revive. It's China's fault too that stock markets are so jittery, taking their cue from the Shanghai exchange — which really is a fiefdom of 'speculators, spivs and traders', unrestrained by state intervention. But fault lies also with world trade negotiators for failing to stop the dumping, with western leaders (including George Osborne) for toadying fruitlessly to Beijing, and with a vast gallery of pundits for over-hyping China's prospects in the first place.

## Is cheap oil bad?

As for oil, it's Saudi Arabia's fault that the price is so low, having kept pumping while global demand was faltering; but it seems harsh to make Iran share the blame for adding another half-million barrels a day to the glut, having been allowed back to market after meeting a promise to start dismantling its nuclear capability. That is, or should be, a step towards regional stability; and anyway cheap oil doesn't provoke economic crises. Quite the reverse: every recession of the past four decades has been preceded by an

upward spike in the barrel price — including its \$147 peak in July 2008.

Economists who have relied on that model throughout their careers are now having to reinterpret ultra-low energy prices, not as a catalyst for further recovery, but as a harbinger of even lower demand as downturn takes hold. Beyond that, the dip below \$30 has brought fears of bad debts for banks that have lent heavily to oil and gas players, particularly in US shale — and of critical energy shortages in a decade's time because so many current exploration projects have had to be put on hold.

So it's also the fault of oil companies, and banks that lend to them? Maybe, but hands up anyone who didn't think the turmoil that followed the Arab Spring heralded an era of \$100-plus oil and disrupted Middle East supply, to which US shale gas was a God-given answer. Which reminds us that 'blame' is best applied to those who behave badly, rather than those who guess wrongly.

## Dad's Army revival

Have our high-street banks, house-buyers and consumers been behaving badly? There's a looming debt crisis abroad, we gather, but not here: Governor Carney says 'this is not a debt-fuelled recovery' even though 'vigilance is required' in relation to rising household borrowings. Our banks have been busy rebuilding their balance sheets, and if they deserve stick it's for not lending enough to smaller businesses. Our house prices keep bubbling, but that's because of foreign cash at the top and too few houses at the bottom, not crazy mortgages. When blame does come to rest in the financial world this time round, I suspect it will be on central bankers like Carney for keeping rates too low for too long, and distorting asset prices with too much QE.

But let's watch and listen: the Dad's Army platoon of financial-disaster commentators is reporting for duty again. Here's Danny Blanchflower on Skype from New Hampshire; Lord Turner is in the radio car; Paul

Mason of Channel 4 News has grown a grisly beard, the better to resemble an Old Testament prophet. Only one familiar, swooping, vowel-strangling voice is missing, having last been heard rambling on ITN about the Corbyn reshuffle. Come back Robert Peston, your country needs you.

## A new tension

Economic change is about conflicting forces: supply versus demand in oil, steel and everything; local heroes versus City villains and Westminster blunderers; domestic momentum versus global headwinds. In relation to the last of those, I'm cheered by a forecast from the well-respected Ernst & Young Item Club that the UK economy is still capable of growing at 2.6 per cent in 2016, boosted by exports, and that with low inflation and eased welfare cuts, consumer spending will increase by 2.8 per cent. But three weeks into a year in which forecasting is clearly going to be an even more dangerous game than usual, I sense a new conflict on the home front: between the reinvigorated and the demoralised.

Everywhere I see established businesses that were strong enough to ride the recession now doing well, many taking on more staff; entrepreneurs energised by new ventures; housebuilders going hell for leather; the voluntary sector, strengthened by necessity, doing good work on all fronts. Then I see public services (whether or not still in public ownership) traumatised by funding cuts, restructurings, insensitive top-down decision-making and the blame culture: libraries and post offices under threat, local government in retreat, doctors striking, taxpayer dissatisfaction rising like the flood waters to which the state's response looked so inadequate.

That second trend threatens to overwhelm all the feelgood that might have come from the first, so that we might find the peak of the recovery has passed before we even noticed it. How is it where you live? Do tell me: martin@spectator.co.uk.

# BOOKS & ARTS

**Mark Cocker** is captivated by Sooyong Park's extraordinary story of filming the great Siberian tiger in the wild

**Horatio Clare** finds Amy Liptrot's frank memoir of alcoholism addictive reading

**Andrew Lycett** admires the indomitable Diana Athill — still publishing essays, aged 98

**Andrew Davies** is unrepentant about chopping out the boring bits of *War and Peace* for his BBC adaptation

**Damian Thompson** notices that Barenboim has the baby-pink skin — and self-belief — of Churchill in old age

**James Delingpole** is attracted to the warped integrity and relentless chain-smoking of the East Germans



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*'Pietà (after Delacroix)',  
1889, by Vincent van Gogh  
Martin Gayford — p40*



## BOOKS

# Charlemagne's legacy

The Holy Roman Empire has been much maligned over the centuries.  
In fact it worked remarkably well, says *Jonathan Steinberg*

## The Holy Roman Empire: A Thousand Years of Europe's History

by *Peter H. Wilson*

Allen Lane, £35, pp. 1008,

ISBN 9781846143182

Spectator Bookshop, £29

Last month in the *Financial Times*, Tony Barber closed a gloomy summary of the European Union's future with this comparison:

Like the Holy Roman Empire which lasted for 1,000 years before Napoleon put it out of its misery in 1806, the EU may not disintegrate but slip into a glacial decline, its political and bureaucratic elites continuing faithfully to observe the rites of a confederacy bereft of power and relevance.

This vivid comparison has much to commend it. Both institutions defy definition. As Voltaire sneered in 1756, 'it's not holy, not Roman and not an empire'. The greatest student of the Holy Roman Empire, Johann Jacob Moser, concluded in his 1776 study:

We have various kinds of lands, various forms of government, with estates and without them, imperial towns, a nobility of whom some are immediate [the ones who can appeal directly to the emperor], subjects of all different sorts, and a thousand other such things — to think, for oneself, what good is it here?

Today's successors to Moser cannot decide if the EU is a union of states or a superstate. It rests on treaties among the members but also on several hundred thousand pages of the *acquis communautaire*: decisions, resolutions, directives and judgments by various bodies in the EU itself.

These similarities may well account for the recent publication of two superb but very different studies of the Old Reich: Joachim Whaley's 2012 *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire* and Peter H. Wilson's *The Holy Roman Empire*. Whaley's two volumes cover the years from 1493 to 1806, while Wilson's book covers the entire 1,000 years in one volume. Whaley works within a chronological framework; Wilson attempts something very ambitious — to treat the history by categories.

The Holy Roman Empire began symbolically in 800 AD, when Charlemagne, the Carolingian king, received an 'imperial' crown from the Pope; and that union of church and state gave it a special status. Within this loosely defined geographic area over the centuries, hundreds of small princes claimed to be 'sovereign' in their territories, and there were the 'free cities', sovereign prince archbishops, prince bishops, prince abbots, secular princes, counts and imperial knights and even imperial villages. The map looked like a crazy jigsaw puzzle.

The establishment of the Habsburg family after 1493 as permanent holders of the imperial title gave new prestige and stability to the imperial crown but complicated its position, since the Habsburgs had huge domains outside the empire. At the same time the kings of Sweden and Denmark had domains inside the empire and gained representation in its institutions.

*Even in today's Germany the  
culture of the medieval town lives  
on in guilds and corporations*

The sheer number of recognised entities offered opportunities for aggrandisement through marriage or inheritance, and even the smallest of princes had claims. No wonder that by the age of reason in the 18th century the system of rule looked antiquated and absurd.

Wilson's history represents the culmination of a lifetime of research and thought, and in its scope and depth of detail is an astonishing scholarly achievement. The author moves from the grand themes to detail with felicity. He adds important insights on the empire's Italian dimensions. The kingdom of Savoy, the main Italian power in the unification of Italy in 1861, belonged to the old Reich and the Duchy of Savoy's

position within the former German kingdom was not entirely meaningless, since it sustained influence within the empire... Savoy's dukes either attended in person or sent a representative to every Reichstag between 1541

and 1714, and they accepted jurisdiction of the empire's other supreme court, the Reichskammergericht, over themselves as imperial Estates.

They continued to pay feudal dues after 1714, and in 1788 tried to gain a new imperial title. These connections, totally ignored in modern histories, restore a complex reality of Europe before the French Revolution.

Lordships passed from family to family as pieces of property. The Frisian lordship of Jever (330 sq kilometres) was inherited by the principality of Anhalt-Zerbst, and became in time the property of Catherine the Great, who was a princess of Anhalt-Zerbst. On her death a fief on the North Sea passed to the Russian family in 1796. As Wilson explains, the 'empire thus fostered a deep-rooted, conservative ideal of freedom as local and particular, shared by members of corporate groups and incorporated communities. These were local and particular liberties, not abstract Liberty shared equally by all inhabitants.'

The establishment of bishoprics and archbishoprics under Charlemagne created a church landscape which lasted for a millennium, and the accumulation of local patronage solidified the structures. The Reichskirchensystem (the imperial church system) a unique feature of the empire, became part of the governing structure. That history explains the state system of support for churches in the Germanic world, including Switzerland, even today, where the state collects a church tax from members to support the institutions of the church.

Wilson uses a relaxed and easy prose, turning antiquated and odd pieces of evidence or description into approachable and comprehensible explanations. Again and again he shows how this much maligned system of rule had virtues which only became general in the modern era. The court system, the use of the printing press by the 1490s, the effective and inexpensive structures of administration, the way the Reichspfennigmeister (imperial penny master) collected and administered fees and fines imposed by the Reichs-





*The Emperor Maximilian I by Bernhard Strigel*

kammergericht, all worked remarkably well.

The book, in addition to its subject, has an unusual structure. It is analytic, not narrative, divided into 12 chapters, grouped equally into four parts: the themes of ideal, belonging, governance and society. Wilson claims that these themes have been 'grouped for natural progression, so the reader approaches the material like an eagle flying over the empire'. Within each thematic category, there are three subsections. Thus Part III divides into Kingship, Territory and Dynasty; Part IV into Authority, Association and Justice.

The trouble is that the reader cannot approach the material like 'an eagle flying over the empire' because reading moves line by line and page by page. Wilson cannot escape linearity either. Each large section goes back to the beginning or takes up themes that happened at the same time but in the Wilson version take place hundreds of pages from each other. Though the structure challenges readers to maintain evidence in their heads, there is a central theme, like a ground base, which unites the sections.

Wilson urges his readers to reduce the damage done by previous generations, who 'had, with terrible results, manipu-

lated evidence to convey false continuities and to claim parts of European "historic" homelands'. This theme becomes explicit in the final chapter, Afterlife. The Reich as an ideal and a word has been tarnished by Bismarck's Kaiserreich and still more so by Hitler's Drittes Reich. Wilson shows how the evolution of the old empire solved problems in a pragmatic, unsystematic way but much more peacefully than its successors.

Less well known is how much of the 'old Reich' survived 1945. Postwar west Germany looked back to Charlemagne for a non-national model of Europe's future, and the old Reich, with its cult of the pre-national regions, evoked the ghost of the Carolingians in the Coal and Steel Community of 1950. Even in today's reunited Germany the culture of the medieval town lives on in the corporations and guilds and in the cult of the *Heimat*, an untranslatable phrase which includes 'home town' and 'home land'.

The book closes with critical reflections on the European Union: 'The decentralised, fragmented political structures do not lend themselves to common direct democratic control', Wilson concludes on the last page, arguing that 'democracy derives from the openness of debate, not the practice of voting'. But therein lies the difficulty: the vast bureaucracy of the European Union in its huge Brussels buildings makes everything available online, but the citizens either do not read the material or cannot understand Euro-speak if they try. Euro-sceptics profit from this ignorance.

Wilson's plea to his contemporaries to rethink the past is admirable and might have been useful even in the last years of the 20th century. Now, when the past has ceased to exist in the minds of those under 30, his voice cries in the wilderness. Most of my students find a 30-page article a burden. They cannot imagine the pleasure that a massive work of scholarship like Wilson's can give the conscientious reader, because such intense reading needs background, practice and discipline, not virtues often found in our universities today. For those who still have them, this book will be a very stimulating read.

## A pitiful wreck

Caroline Moore

### The Noise of Time

by Julian Barnes

Cape, £14.99, pp. 183,

ISBN 9781910702604

Spectator Bookshop, £12.75

When I look at the black-and-white photograph of Julian Barnes on the flap of his latest book, the voice of Kenneth Clark floats up from memories of the black-and-white television of my childhood: 'He is smiling — the smile of reason.' Supremely 'civilised', thin-lipped, faintly superior, temperamentally given to aphorism, it is no surprise to discover that Julian Barnes is a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

Yet Barnes in his fiction is unlike the simplified Voltaire of Clark's *Civilisation*. His novels never proclaim the triumph of reason: instead, they explore the dark and disruptive, uncivilised emotions on the edge of words — love, certainly, but also jealousy, paranoia, inconsolable grief and the fear of dying. His cool, detached prose, controlled and controlling, may seem inappropriate for such subjects; but it adds to the shock when something uncivilisable surfaces through ratiocination — 'the crocodile's snout in the

lily pond', as Barnes once put it. That apparently know-it-all smile is misleading: what Barnes makes us feel is the limitations of reason, and that no one can know it all (or is it a very superior form of superiority that is indistinguishable from humility?)

Barnes is particularly un-French in his instinctive distrust of the theorising so beloved of the Left Bank. His latest novel — if that is the right description for a work that many will see only as a prolonged biographical essay upon Shostakovich — is an exposition of the condition of being trapped inside

*It's a brilliant portrait of an artist trying — perhaps unsuccessfully — not to sign away his soul*

the abstractions of extreme dogma. The self-lacerating composer, conforming under Stalin, lashes out against Frenchified theorists: 'How easy it was to be a Communist when you weren't living under Communism,' he says of Picasso, who 'sat like a rich man in Paris and the south of France'; and he catches Sartre in the copyright bureau 'counting out his fat wad of roubles with great care'.

*The Noise of Time* is in many ways a quintessentially Barnesian work. It is a slim volume, pared to the point of claustrophobia; and it clings so closely to the known facts

of Shostakovich's life that some may find it airless. Readers who turn to novels for the imaginative sweep they offer, for the exuberant expansiveness found in escaping to new worlds, will rarely choose Barnes for their fictional fix.

Such readers will doubtless complain that he adds nothing to our knowledge of Shostakovich. This is true; but beside the point. Barnes is not trying to 'answer' the usual questions about Shostakovich: how far his submission to the demands of the brutal regime, including publicly parroting the party line, compromised his integrity as an artist. 'Answers', in Barnes's universe, would be patronising, presumptuous — know-it-all, indeed. Instead, what he does is to internalise such uncertainties: it is precisely these unanswerable questions that feed the self-loathing with which Shostakovich constantly torments himself for constitutional or institutionalised cowardice.

The much-disputed 'revisionist' version of Shostakovich, set out by Solomon Volkov in his *Testimony*, is here shown to raise more questions than it answers. Can a completely secret dissident be a dissident at all? Is it possible to preserve a private self, armoured in irony, distancing one's soul from the actions forced upon one? Does refusing to read the party statements one is forced to sign, denouncing the compos-

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ers one loves, somehow preserve an inner purity, or is it an extra level of despicable evasiveness? And at what point does the inactive self putrefy within its encrusted shell: when does the irony enter the soul?

The claustrophobia and airlessness of Barnes's submission to his sources actually feeds rather brilliantly into this evocation of an artist in the Stalinist regime. Barnes, and Shostakovich, are constrained by history: Barnes is imagining the limitations of imagination. If that all sounds a bit too damned clever-clever and possibly even French for your liking, you might be put off this book. That would be a shame.

Barnes offers few of the usual re-creative joys of historical fiction: there is little that is sensuous or dramatic in this work, nothing obviously imagined. But read it without preconceptions, and it becomes an extraordinary portrait of a state of despair in which clarity of thought is a trap, and the armour of self-justification only encloses and exacerbates a quivering, neurotic jelly of inner pain. It is a brilliant portrait of an artist trying — perhaps unsuccessfully — not to sign away his soul. Barnes catches the phenomenon described, with mingled scorn and sympathy, by Solzhenitsyn: 'That shackled genius Shostakovich would thrash about like a wounded thing, clasp himself with tightly folded arms so that his fingers could not hold a pen... that tragic genius, that pitiful wreck Shostakovich.'

## Tracking the super cats

### Mark Cocker

#### **The Great Soul of Siberia: In Search of the Elusive Siberian Tiger**

by Sooyong Park

Collins, £10.99, pp. 288,  
ISBN 9780008156169

Of all charismatic animals, tigers are surely the most filmed, televised, documented, noisily cherished and, paradoxically, the most persecuted on Earth. It is also probably the one wild mammal more people wish to see than any other. In Asia, images of striped cats are indivisible from the modern tourist industries of several countries, especially India and Nepal.

Yet this is not the case for the most impressive of all tiger populations, which is the race found in Siberia. Just to give you a sense of its stature: most Bengal tigers weigh about 150kg, but this relative from south-easternmost Russia can be more than twice as heavy.

The Korean author of this extraordinary book describes a moment when he investigates the claw marks left by one of these super cats, a male called Khajain. The dagger lines carved into the tree trunk stand way over Sooyong Park's head at more than



3 metres. 'Khajain', incidentally, means 'Great King'.

The other statistic that explains why virtually no one has caught so much as a glimpse of this tiger race in the wild, which has been estimated to number just 500 individuals, is the size of its territory. Once again Khajain illustrates the issue beautifully. By chance Park was able to reconstruct, based on footprints and other physical signs, a sense of Khajain's movements in one 15-hour period. In that time this animal had covered 92 kilometres, the equivalent distance from the Humber to the Wash.

Park has worked for almost 20 years just south of Vladivostok in four contiguous Russian nature reserves, and estimates that their total land area, which is equal to the whole of Lincolnshire, has a carrying capacity of just 20 to 25 Siberian tigers. When he started the task of trying to film them there was less than an hour's footage in existence. Today Park possesses thousands of hours of film that document in exquisite detail the lives, loves and fortunes of several Siberian tiger families.

To achieve this he put himself to more expense and through more personal privation than I have ever encountered in the context of a natural history endeavour, except perhaps the events described

in Apsley Cherry Gerrard's *The Worst Journey in the World*, when he and other members of the Scott Polar team walked to an emperor penguin colony in the Antarctic winter.

Park's version of wildlife hell involved not exertion but inaction. His entire summers were spent tracking tiger movements so that he could work out the optimum spots in the forest where he could excavate and establish look-out hides from which to film their behaviour. These shelters were made of wood panelling lined with blankets and cardboard and measured 2x2 metres with a ceiling height of just 1.8 metres.

In winter it could be as cold inside his chamber as the exterior landscape: 30° centigrade below. Yet Park would wait for up to two months at a time, never leaving his underground cell nor his self-appointed task for any reason, until relieved by colleagues. He would subsist on rice balls, seaweed, dried fruit and nuts: ingredients selected to give off the minimum odour and thus the least sign of occupation to his beloved tigers.

Even his own excrement was bagged and hermetically sealed and stashed with him in his lair until he was re-supplied.

Centuries of persecution have made this particular population of tigers hypersensitive to any kind of human disturbance. Park suggests that poachers routinely put out traps and pre-loaded guns that the cats invariably discover and destroy. All 23 of his own self-triggering cameras had been located and ruined in like fashion by tigers. It is this survival ethic that explains how these animals have persisted, despite so much poaching, and why Park was obliged to go to such lengths to film them.

His documentary footage is one remarkable achievement, but this book is another. Nothing is exaggerated, no achievement is trumpeted, no risk, exertion or challenge is overstated. Instead Park pares everything back to a precise poetry of fact and of patient observation.

He treats both his massive knowledge of tigers and his extraordinary personal story with complete humility. He also captures the soul of these Siberian forests and their wildlife riches in a way that can have few rivals. As a work that attempts to persuade that animals, other than our own species, really matter, it has few equals. As a loving and heartfelt tribute to the majesty of tigers it is peerless. If you read one nature book this year, make it this one.



## Age cannot wither her

### Andrew Lycett

#### Alive, Alive Oh! And Other Things That Matter

by Diana Athill

Granta Books, £12.99, pp 168,

ISBN 9781783782543

Spectator Bookshop, £10.99

There's something reassuring about 98-year-old Diana Athill. She's stately and well-ordered, like the gardens at Ditchingham Hall in Norfolk, her grandparents' Georgian house where she spent long periods of her childhood. Yes, she really is of that class, though she doesn't trumpet it (she was presented at court in the brief reign of King Edward VIII) and, as is well known, she is of more than a certain age — born in 1917, towards the end of the first world war but, in social terms, a throwback to the Edwardian era, and half a decade before the publication of *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* signalled the arrival of Modernism.

One of the ten essays in this delightful collection is about her attitude to clothes. Her favourite garments remain the old-fashioned ball gowns — often velvet and taffeta creations by her self-taught mother — which she, as a young woman with a 22-inch waist and a passion for *Vogue*, wore to dances. As she notes, this was in the 'pre-sexy' days, when desirability was associated with 'beauty', 'prettiness' and 'charm', rather than provocativeness. She recalls, with a hint of disapproval, first hearing the word 'sexy' applied to an item of beachwear. It sounded transatlantic and rather vulgar.

Come the late Sixties, she wore sensible maxi dresses rather than flirtatious minis (albeit she was by then over 50, so probably already too old for revealing shows of thigh). I suspect, however, that she was always a handsome woman rather than a vamp.

Yet she has a habit of flouting convention. It's not the subject of this book but, after a protracted affair with an older man starting when she was 15, she found she enjoyed sex and later, as she developed her successful career as a publisher, she lived with, but never married, a succession of men.

She has written about these affairs — with the Egyptian writer who committed suicide in her Primrose Hill flat, with the American Black Power activist who was later murdered, and with the Jamaican playwright whom she initially shared with his wife, then with another younger woman, before he returned to the Caribbean, leaving her alone, but content, in North London. She has admitted to being a 'sucker for oppressed foreigners', though her fellow publisher Carmen Callil has called her an 'avid dabbler in female masochism'.

There are no dud essays in this compilation but, as well as her fond evoca-

tion of her grandparents' garden, a couple more stand out. One is about the unsettling and ultimately corrupting experience of expatriate life in post-independence Tobago. She writes beautifully about a place where 'flowers clamber and perch as though they had claws and wings'. But she is uneasy about the condescension of white foreigners, who talk of their 'priceless' servants and pause before describing a local as a friend, as if to show their broadmindedness. She concludes they are all living a dream which, they should remember, is very different from reality.

The other cracker is about the time, in her late early forties, when her period didn't arrive, she hummed and ha-ed about having an abortion, then decided to embrace the moment and, with great enthusiasm, to have the baby. Sadly, though her no-nonsense style wouldn't allow such a word, she woke up one night in excruciating pain and bleeding heavily. She only just made it to hospital in time for the blood transfusions needed to save her own life. But when her ordeal was over she didn't feel any real loss, only recalling her sense of happiness when she was pregnant.

Since her mid-seventies, she maintains she has stopped feeling a sexual being and has welcomed the restfulness that comes with 'Old Woman' status. In the last decade she has moved (the subject of a piece here) to an old people's home in Highgate, which she characterises as her most decisive initiative in a life in which things have just tended to happen.

Any residual wistfulness or sense of entitlement in Athill is trumped and enhanced at every stage by her wry, humane intelligence. As a manifesto for living to the full, this deceptively slight book couldn't be better.

## Drying out in the Orkneys

### Horatio Clare

#### The Outrun

by Amy Liptrot

Canongate, £14.99, pp. 304,

ISBN 9781782115472

Spectator Bookshop, £12.75

'If I were to go mad,' Amy Liptrot writes in her memoir of alcoholism and the Orkneys, 'It would come as no surprise at all.' One surprise of this book is its sanity, which is remarkable, given Liptrot's beginnings.

We open, unforgettably, with her parents passing each other on an island runway. Her mother is being flown home from hospital, holding the newborn Amy; her father, in the grip of a manic episode and a strait jacket, is heading the other way. Liptrot recalls another fit which drove him to smash all the windows of the family farm and hide with her, aged 11, from the police and doc-

tors. 'As his sedatives kicked in I crouched with my father in a corner of my bedroom, sharing a banana. "You are my girl," he said.' Liptrot leaves us shivering at the implications.

Her mother joins an evangelical church, exposing the young girl to the theatrics of charismatic preachers and their totalitarian take on the devil and masturbation. If home is intense, things are wild outdoors. The Orkneys enjoy winds so strong that in 1952 they plucked 70,000 chickens into oblivion and had 'tethered cows flying in the air like kites'.

Everything below their largest island, 'the mainland', is 'south' to Orcadians; Liptrot flees to a London which is mostly a purgatorial Hackney. After she slips away from a party in order 'to drink alone and at a faster pace' alcoholism descends: fighting, hysterics, losing love and being subject to violent attack are described with extreme

*The Orkneys enjoy winds so strong that in 1952 they had 'tethered cows flying in the air like kites'*

calm. Instead of dialogue (barely a dozen lines) or substantially realised characters, *The Outrun* presents a meditative interior journey of the kind the internet spawns in unreadable infinity, but which Liptrot elevates to an art.

Patrick Hamilton would have raised a double to her description of alcoholic neuropathy, in which the body freezes into semi-paralysis, and a second to her self-portrait in London, through which we gain a sense of intensely lonely generations split between dowdy realities and cybereal dreams. 'Wherever I am, I spend most of my time with a laptop online,' she writes. 'I've moved around a lot but the internet is my home.'

In the book's second strand, which sees Liptrot pass through rehab and tackle the Twelve Steps on the way back to the Orkneys, and on to the outermost of them, Papa Westray (also known as Papay), the drama shifts. Having been swept into dipsomania we now share a brittle and mighty struggle to stay dry. The islands come to the rescue. Undertaking a corncrake survey for the RSPB, Liptrot spots noctilucent clouds: 'Fifty miles high, in the deep twilight, icy blue whisps hang like lightning crossed with cotton wool. I get out of the car and hold my phone to the sky, smiling like a nutter.'

Wintering on Papay in an RSPB cottage, having made sure 'the broadband was working before the hot water', she faces the isolation of the retreatant, a much kinder sort than that of the alcoholic. While her recovery through sea swimming and clifftop walks, visions of the northern lights, the heave of island histories and the roar of

their weathers make a transporting story, it is Liptrot's navigations between online and physical reality which render the book remarkable.

She writes:

I am carrying out semi-scientific studies into myself, performing bathymetry of the soul. I am fascinated by counting and plotting and marking my daily activities and movements, collecting bottomless data. I've been tracking my sleep cycles and carrying out surveys of my dreams. I download a menstrual-cycle recorder and watch it sync with the moon, waxing and waning in another window of my browser,

and with every urge to drink fought off, this mining of herself yields ore. She describes a sense of omniscience granted by the simultaneous tracking of ships, pods of orcas, weather and aircraft. The shade of a Midas-madness of our time, whereby everything upon which the eye falls demands to be turned into information, becomes for Liptrot a shelter against the claims of the abyss. I clenched my teeth for her when she finds a bottle of vodka with one sip left in it washed up on the shore. She sniffs but does not drink. 'Is this all you've got, North Sea? I can take it. I can take anything you throw at me.'

I believed her, and salute her book for its heroic rebuff to the waves of the various dark and hectic seas which so many carry within.

## The medium is the message

Josephine Livingstone

### Drawing Blood

by Molly Crabapple

Harper Collins, £20, pp. 352,

ISBN 9780062323644

Spectator Bookshop, £16.99

Molly Crabapple is an American artist and *Drawing Blood* is the story of her life. That life has only been going on since 1983, but despite its author's relative youth *Drawing Blood* is a valuable political document. It tells of a life lived in struggle — against the prospect of going dead broke, against gross misogyny within the arts and against sex workers, against the obscene wealth splattering the fine art business — redeemed by intoxicating levels of exposure, then finally reoriented by a new political consciousness.

Crabapple describes an artistic childhood followed by a pretentious adolescence spent performance-reading Nietzsche and hating everybody. Bored of America, the teenage Crabapple goes on holiday to Paris and Turkey. This section won't sit so well with readers outside the US, who find it hard to thrill



*'Burlesque in New York mutated into vaudeville's disreputable sister, filled with dirty comics and strippers in body stockings or less'*

to the adventures of Americans travelling for the first time, especially when the thrill consists of being a jobless American lolling on the Shakespeare and Co. cots. But as Crabapple ages, and sees through the exceptionally delinquent men who at times travel with her, her awareness grows.

As a young adult, she begins to hustle her way into a career as an artist and an alternative model in pre-crash New York City. Studying at a medium-to-indifferent college, the Fashion Institute of Technology, she alternates between working as an art model and a burlesque performer, and observing the bodies of others as an artist. This is by far the most valuable section of the book. Her acute sense for opportunities for solidarity between the marginalised and the broke colours her recollection of the 'burlesque revival', which lost so much of its political sheen in the course of becoming mainstream.

Crabapple's stories of friendships made and broken with other 'naked-girl' professionals are moving, while her tales of in-house drawing work at a notorious nightclub, the Box, are rife with delicious gossip.

*As Crabapple becomes more directly political, her work takes on the force and bite of Goya or Gillray*

The Box's co-proprietor Simon Hammerstein comes off as an individual of unbelievable mediocrity. The nightclub itself came to symbolise the most grotesque form of recreational spending in pre-crash New York City, but also saw the transformation of burlesque from underground art into the most aspirational form of classic nightclub glamour.

In the third section of the book several other writers and artists get a lot of space: the activist/journalists Laurie

Penny and Natasha Lennard, and the porn actress Stoya among others. This section describes how Crabapple and her work were politicised by the financial crash and the various subsequent protest movements, most importantly Occupy. It is so concerned with citing the influence of Crabapple's (presumably current) friends that her own voice gets slightly occluded. She writes about sex work and the meaning of hustle with a keenness that seems more politically important than any UK Uncut rally.

There remains the question of Crabapple's actual work. She considers the relationship of her work to fine art and to illustration at one point in the book, but doesn't care much for the distinction. Some readers may find this confusing, since her work seems so definitively in the tradition of decorative ink illustration. It's relentlessly figurative, and as Crabapple has become more directly political her work has taken on the satirical narrative force and bite of Goya's 'Caprichos' or Gillray's cartoons.

Indeed, Crabapple's work is best viewed in the light of satirical illustration, since, without that context, her artfully-placed inkblots can read as decorative to the point of affectation. Her sketches sometimes look as if they've been put through a 'Victorian notebook' Instagram filter. For these reasons her detailed, allegorical large-scale paintings are by far her finest productions. The Shell Game collection is a very serious work.

In short, this autobiography would make thrilling reading for a young countercultural artist or a person in need of educating on the politics of sex work and erotic performance art. *Drawing Blood* is not a deeply considered text on the visual arts, but it is a deeply considered text on the life of one young woman, making a certain kind of history.

## Girl about town

Mark Mason

### What Goes Around: A London Cycle Courier's Story

by Emily Chappell

Faber, £12.99, pp. 310,

ISBN 9781783350537

Spectator Bookshop, £10.99

The old ditty got it wrong: it should have been 'Maybe it's because I'm not a Londoner that I love London so'. The capital's biggest fans, I tend to find, are those who weren't born there, and Emily Chappell is yet another example. Originally from Wales, she has written more than just an engaging account of her work as a London cycle courier: she has chronicled the way in which the capital provides a home for those who don't fit in elsewhere. The job itself is a perfect fit for a restless soul: Chappell describes the

sweet spot where my body became so attuned to the bike and road that all resistance seemed to melt away ... experiencing a strange sense of stillness, as though I had gone so far into motion that I had reached its centre.

At Marble Arch, with cars on either side of her, she is 'flowing along on the currents I knew of old, as contented as a sea otter'.

Not that she was a natural courier. A keen cyclist, yes, but her early months in the job involved living up to the 'foolhardy proclamation' that she could do it. Gradually the lessons came along. Thursday is the real killer (Friday is 'infused with the adrenalin of everyone else's last-minute deadlines'). To save fumbling for the key to your bike-lock you should keep it on an elasticated hair band around your wrist. A good place to warm up on cold days is the rotisserie oven in Sainsbury's. Chappell learns that 'a turning wheel is an earning wheel', and perfects the little jump that settles the bag on her shoulders. The action of turning down her radio on entering a reception becomes so ingrained that she finds herself reaching for the dial even when she's off duty and walking into a cinema.

She also discovers London itself, guided by her delivery routes but also by the locations in Iris Murdoch novels, which she makes a point of exploring. Blackfriars Bridge ends up as the victim of what Chappell admits is a 'slightly irrational dislike', although she treasures Mayfair's Mount Street Gardens as a beautiful place to hide away. (I share this opinion, so strongly that I'm wary of revealing the secret here.) The value of a Harley Street address is so great that the first few buildings on the streets coming off it usually nick the label for themselves too. Chappell shares a Bedford Row bench with a tramp, only to realise he's actually a barrister. She is tipped a fiver by Julian Assange's assistant to deliver pack-

ages in a particular order. Her riding develops to the point where she can read a car driver's intentions from the angle of his head on the headrest.

It's obvious that Chappell takes pride in her work (she makes a point of typing in regular clients' names without asking them, to show she's remembered), and as a reader you take it personally when she is treated badly. Security guards make brushing away motions to indicate she must use the goods entrance. One office is famed for the quality of its sweets, 'but the receptionist wasn't the friendly type, so you had to wait until she was signing the docket before plunging your hand into the jar'. You wonder how Jennifer Aniston fared; the actress, Chappell reveals, was once a courier.

*What Goes Around* might be a few pages too long, but the writing is so good you can forgive it that. The statue of Commerce on Holborn Viaduct 'reached out into the void above Farringdon, as if she had just cast a handful of coins down into the river of traffic below'. London Bridge is a 'doleful conveyor belt shovelling commuters into the furnace of the city'. Chappell works hard to 'scrape myself off the bottom of my overdraft'. Several years ago John McLaren wrote a novel called *Black Cabs*, in which London taxi drivers eavesdrop on their passengers to plan a corporate sting. The courier equivalent might be too obvious a next step for Chappell — but whatever she writes, I'm looking forward to reading it.

## One holy mess

Ysenda Maxtone Graham

### Avenue of Mysteries

by John Irving

Doubleday, £20, pp. 458,

ISBN 9781451664164

Spectator Bookshop, £16.99

This novel, John Irving's 14th, took the sheen off my Christmas, and here are the reasons.

1. The comments on the back of the book ('Irving is the wisest, most anguished and funniest novelist of his generation' — *Chicago Sun Times*) made me feel lonely. He might have been wise, anguished and funny in *The World According to Garp*, 33 years ago. But never once in these 458 pages did I laugh, sympathise, or glean an ounce of

wisdom. Instead, I lost confidence that reading novels could ever be a pleasure.

2. Take the main character, Juan Diego, a 'dump kid' growing up on one of the vast rubbish dumps on the edge of Oaxaca ('Wahaca'). I enjoy reading about a dump as much as the next person, so was hopeful. But the picture Irving paints of the dump is two-dimensional: fires, stray dogs, dead dogs and burning books. The young Juan Diego reads the dumped books before they're burnt, thus educating himself. The 'dump boss' runs over his foot, so he has a limp for life. Half of the novel is him being

*Juan Diego's sister is a mind-reader,  
but she can't predict the future.*

*She gets eaten by a lion in the zoo*

54 and visiting the Philippines as a successful, limping novelist. The other half is him dreaming about his childhood. The dreams are intensified by the beta-blockers he takes: so, pill-induced memory-dreams, and more of them than you could bear me to tell you about.

3. He has erections in his Cathay Pacific pyjama suit. I didn't want to know about his erections — all the less because they are brought on by taking either a whole or a half Viagra pill (Irving always tells us the precise dose). On his flight to the Philippines he meets a mother and daughter, Miriam and Dorothy, fans of his novels, and becomes sexually obsessed with both of them. Dorothy calls his penis 'one alert-looking guy'.

4. Juan Diego's younger sister Lupe is a mind-reader. She gets eaten by a lion when she and Juan Diego go and work in a zoo, so we only see her in the childhood part. She knows what everyone's thinking, including the lions in the zoo. But she can't predict the future. This fantastical element is not believable and adds nothing to the novel.

5. Irving is addicted to 'elegant variation'. A writer of his stature should know better. Or his editors should have dared to mention it to the veteran bestselling author. (There: I just used one, to prove how annoying it is.) The Jesuit Edward Bonshaw, for example, who likes to whip himself, is described as 'Edward Bonshaw', 'Señor Eduardo', 'the young midwesterner', 'the Iowan', 'the flagellant', 'the flagellating Iowan', 'the excited American', 'the scholastic', 'the passionate new teacher', 'the young American missionary', 'the colourfully dressed missionary' and 'the zealot'.

6. Irving likes showing off his Spanish. The dump children are '*los niños de la basura*'. When he uses a bit of Spanish he makes sure it's translated for us straight away — and we're aware that it's John Irving stepping out of the story to translate. ('The noun *pastora* means "shepherdess".) I found this patronising.

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7. It's hard to work out what this novel is really about. Vacuous sentences like this don't help:

The chain of events, the links in our lives — what leads us where we're going, the course we follow to our ends, what we don't see coming, what we do — all this can be mysterious, or simply unseen, or even obvious.

There's loads about the Catholic church, Jesuits and statues of the Virgin Mary. On one flight, Juan Diego is so engrossed in his dream about the Virgin Mary that everyone thinks he's dead. Normally I love reading about holiness. But I got nothing from this holy mess.

## Revolution now and then

### Anna Aslanyan

#### The Mother

by Maxim Gorky, translated by Hugh Aplin  
Alma Classics, £8.99, pp. 371,  
ISBN 9781847495648

Maxim Gorky was trumpeted as 'the great proletarian writer' by Soviet critics, who considered his novel *The Mother* one of the most significant books of the 20th century. Completed in 1906, after Gorky had already been recognised internationally, it is based on the events of 1902, when the workers of Sormovo, a factory settlement near Gorky's native city of Nizhny Novgorod, held what we'd now call a 'mass anti-capitalist protest'. The demonstration was brutally dispersed and, after a trial that stirred Russia, six of its organisers were sentenced to life in exile. The October Revolution was still 15 years away.

The book starts with a description of the settlement's bleak life, filled with hard work and hard drinking. Pavel Vlasov, a young worker living with his mother, Nilovna, wants to find a way out. To him, that means learning: the facts about the world and, ultimately, the truth. When his friends begin gathering at the Vlasovs', to read books and talk about the injustice of the existing order (their self-education being 'a step in a long... staircase leading to somewhere in the distance and slowly taking people higher') Nilovna is worried. Her son and his comrades are socialists; the same people who, she's heard, killed the Tsar. Yet she soon realises that theirs is a just cause, and starts helping them in their work.

The Bolsheviks praised the novel as a paean to socialist ideals, but its message encompasses more than mere class struggle. It is full of Biblical allusions: the revolutionaries are portrayed as saints, ready for martyrdom; Pavel speaks with 'the ardour of a disciple'; the Gospels are quoted to convey ideas about truth-searching. 'They've deceived us with God too!' says

one of the characters before leaving the factory to go around villages, determined to open people's eyes to the way they are being exploited: by the priests, the authorities, the 'gentlefolk'. 'People won't believe the naked word — suffering's needed, the word has to be washed in blood,' he warns, his words sounding especially ominous now, after a century of revolutions.

The book's central theme is the mother's awakening from a life of fear and ignorance: 'Everything's evidently been beaten out of me, my soul's been boarded up tight, it's gone blind and can't hear...' Among the best scenes are those in which Nilovna stealthily teaches herself to read again, remembering the letters she once learned as a child. Lis-

tening to Pavel's incendiary speech at the trial, she sees in it 'the pure word' that has to be brought to the people. In a powerful final scene, when gendarmes arrest her, she finds her own voice and the courage to cry out: 'They can't drown reason with blood!'

Rereading *The Mother* in Hugh Aplin's new translation, I found it surprisingly topical. The eternal themes aside, two things are particularly striking. First, that Nilovna, perceived by everyone (including herself) as an old woman, is 40. Second, that the word 'socialism', which Pavel and his comrades did their utmost to consecrate with blood, recently emerged as Merriam-Webster's online dictionary's most searched-for term.

— Alistair Elliot



MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

#### A Day Off

Well, I'll go window-shopping in *Larousse*  
for seeds of words. Strangely, they're not for sale —  
you help yourself to what the worlds produce.

Here are the conic sections, there the whales,  
the art, the musical instruments, the wigs....

My search is stopped by a picture of the sarigue,  
*Didelphis*, a marsupial of the west,  
with young. O Marianne Moore, come, look!

She curves her 'long prehensile tail' right back  
towards her neck — it's like the pantograph  
of an old tram — the little ones climb on,  
lift their own small prehensile tails, attach,  
and off they ride to bed. See, one's  
still trying to get on. Wait! Wait for me!

## ARTS

# Wild at heart

Delacroix's frigid self-control concealed an emotional volcano. Martin Gayford explores the paradoxes that define the apostle of modernism

At the Louvre the other day there was a small crowd permanently gathered in front of Delacroix's 'Liberty Leading the People'. They constantly took photographs of the picture itself, and sometimes of themselves standing in front of it. No such attention was given to the other masterpieces of French painting hanging nearby, including many by Delacroix. This painting from 1830 — with its glamorous, bare-breasted personification of *liberté*, *Tricolore* in hand, followed by heroic representatives of the working and middle classes — has become an international shorthand for France itself.

Whether or not this is a valid symbol of the country, it is a misleading guide to Delacroix's own feelings about his native land, its revolutionary traditions and the modern world he watched developing around him in 19th-century Paris. He may have supported *liberté*, but *fraternité* and *égalité* not so much. A truer indication of his opinions is probably to be found in the mural that he painted in a half dome of the library of the Chamber of Deputies at the Palais Bourbon: 'Attila and his Hordes Overrun Italy and the Arts'.

An exhibition next month at the National Gallery will present Delacroix as the apostle of modernism — and rightly so. He was revered as a predecessor by the impressionists and post-impressionists. A couple of hours before I was strolling through the Louvre last week, I was able to climb the scaffolding in the church of Saint-Sulpice where his wall paintings are currently under restoration. From a foot or two away, Delacroix's vivid, vibrating colours and bold brush strokes looked startlingly reminiscent of those of Van Gogh or Gauguin.

There is, however, a paradox about the notion of Delacroix as the forerunner to the avant-garde of the 1880s and '90s. He was a romantic pessimist, inclined to think that civilisation would always decline and barbarism inevitably return. It would be an exaggeration, Kenneth Clark thought, to say that Delacroix sympathised with Attila, but — Clark went on — he gave the leader of the Huns, trampling on the remains of ancient Roman culture, 'the same irresistible energy' as the lions and tigers he loved to paint.

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863) was, like many highly creative people, a bundle of contradictions. He was an ardent lover of big cats, an artist whose images of tigers, Clark thought, were truer self-portraits than the pictures he made of his actual features. Meanwhile in everyday life Delacroix was an anglophile dandy — one of the first Parisians to wear suits cut in the English style — who aimed at a frigid self-control. 'The mask is everything,' he noted in 1823.

The contrast between Delacroix's carefully preserved exterior and the swirling emotions within was summed up in a celebrated metaphor by his friend and admirer Charles Baudelaire. The painter resembled,

*Delacroix's images of tigers were truer self-portraits than the pictures he made of his actual features*

Baudelaire wrote, 'A volcanic crater artistically concealed beneath bouquets of flowers.' He wanted to hide, as the poet put it, the 'rage in his heart' behind a glacial façade, but also — as the scholar Lee Johnson added — 'his vulnerability and shyness'.

Delacroix suffered throughout his life from poor health, possibly caused by a tubercular infection that affected his throat and lungs. Furthermore, he was also plagued by a weak digestion, perhaps resulting from highly strung nerves. At work, carefully wrapped up against the cold in an old jacket buttoned to the chin, slippers and a muffler around the neck, he resembled neither a tiger nor a dandy.

He was a child of the French Revolution, but probably an illegitimate one. His ostensible father, Charles-François Delacroix, was minister of foreign affairs in the republican government. However, Charles-François Delacroix was impotent for many years as a result of an enormous growth on one of his testicles. This was removed in an operation — without anaesthetic, of course — in mid-September 1797. Eugène was born seven and a half months later. A persistent rumour claims that his true father was the great statesman Talleyrand, Charles-François Delacroix's successor at the foreign ministry.

In 1805, Charles-François Delacroix died leaving only unwise investments and large

debts. The painter came of age in the France of the restored monarchy, which he deplored (hence his support for the revolutionaries of 1830, which ejected the reactionary Charles X). But, like the heroes of his friend the novelist Stendhal, Delacroix deplored not just the stuffiness and corruption of Paris in the 1820s, but also the modern world itself with its new wealth and mass public. 'I have never loved the crowd,' he wrote in 1820, 'nor all that the crowd feeds on.'

As time went on, his dislike focused on the bourgeoisie, often a bugbear for intellectuals and artists, in France and elsewhere. An acquaintance recalled that 'among all those men who had a profound, ineradicable contempt for the bourgeois', only Flaubert disdained them more than Delacroix. Even his perfect manners scarcely concealed his loathing for the middle classes who represented, he believed, a 'wholly new barba-

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*'The Death of Sardanapalus', 1846, by Eugène Delacroix*

alism'. He was, in other words, a snob both socially and intellectually.

'Commercialism and love of pleasure are,' he gloomily noted in 1857, 'to the present way of thinking, the most compelling motives of the human soul.' When the idea of progress — the 'great chimera of modern times' — was mentioned, he would ask where the contemporary equivalents of Raphael or Phidias were.

As it happened, Delacroix knew more geniuses than most people do, in any age. Chopin, Stendhal, Baudelaire and George Sand were among his circle (Balzac he knew but didn't much like). He was an example of another paradox: the insider who feels like an outsider. One of the plagues of the modern age, Delacroix felt, was journalists — and in particular art critics, who were, it is true, unreasonably rude about his work. Delacroix was resolutely opposed by the

artistic establishment of his day. It took him no fewer than seven attempts before he was elected, very late in life, to the Académie des Beaux-Arts. Yet he was loaded with well-paid commissions through the assistance of friends such as the politician and writer Adolphe Thiers.

So it is that some of Delacroix's most majestic achievements are now hidden away in government premises. He painted a huge cycle on the theme of the rise and fall of civilisation in the library of the Palais Bourbon (seat of the French National Assembly). At one end Orpheus teaches the arts of civilisation to the — slightly dubious — ancient Greeks; at the other, Attila destroys them. This, and his depiction of a scene from Dante's 'Inferno' in the dome of the library at the Palais du Luxembourg — seat of the Sénat — are not easy to visit these days because of the

new barbarism of international terrorism.

They are evidence of another paradox. Delacroix was in many ways the final representative of the line of grand public pictures descended from Raphael and Michelangelo. The late works in Saint-Sulpice are the last great religious murals in the European tradition, but they were painted by a despairing agnostic. Delacroix believed that after death mankind faced 'night, dreadful night' — or so he told George Sand. He thought Voltaire had been correct to declare that while alive humanity was faced with a stark choice between being 'convulsed with anxiety or lethargic with boredom'. There, too, he perhaps anticipated the predicament of the modern age.

*Delacroix and the Rise of Modern Art runs from 17 February to 22 May at the National Gallery.*



# Pornographer-in-Chief

What does Andrew Davies have to say to those who accuse him of gratuitous rumpy-pumpy in his adaptations of the classics? *Stephen Smith* finds out

BBC/JAIRE SPANHAM



*'We can really slow down and live with the characters, understand what they're thinking and feeling': a scene from the BBC's adaptation of 'War and Peace'*

Like Black Rod and the Poet Laureate, screenwriter Andrew Davies occupies one of the most colourful and arcane offices in public life. He is Pornographer-in-Chief, a title that was first bestowed by the journalist Paul Johnson on the boss of Channel 4, Sir Michael Grade. Davies has assumed the mantle by virtue (or vice) of sexing up cherished texts from the literary canon for the gratification of television producers. His adaptation of *War and Peace* has taken critical grapeshot for including incestuous romps that do not strictly feature in the novel. Simon Schema, who bashfully admits he has made his way to the end of the book only eight times, claims to have detected no evidence of a sexual relationship between siblings Anatole and Helene.

Davies's oystery eyes glimmer — but is it with mischief? Or ennui? 'I think he's read it eight times and never noticed it. After my first reading, I hadn't noticed it,' he says. 'Tolstoy did put one little scene in where Anatole is kissing Helene's neck and shoulders, and Pierre (her husband) comes upon them and is alarmed. You think, that's not your average brother and sister, is it? I felt quite happy in making a bit more of a scene of it. Quite often, sex is the motivating power in 19th-century books, for instance *Middlemarch*. The writers couldn't write

those scenes in their time but I can in ours.'

Davies, who is 79, says he had been putting off reading *War and Peace* until the BBC came calling. 'I was frightened it would be disappointingly dull but I was electrified by how fresh and modern it felt.' The snowy-haired screenwriter is sitting in the kind of deckchair that film directors used to have their names stencilled on to. We are in his Narnia-like writing den at the top of his Tudorbethan home in Kenilworth: the

*'I felt a wicked thrill about cutting the greatest book of all time into pieces'*

Davieses bought the house next door and knocked through, so the writer's commute entails stepping through his bedroom cupboard into the corresponding fixture next door, and from there across a short stretch of floor to his desk.

How, some wonder, has he filleted Tolstoy's epic to just six hours of screen time? He says, 'When people watch it, it doesn't feel rushed. The director [Tom Harper] has enabled us to have those moments when we can really slow down and live with the characters, understand what they're thinking and feeling.'

'I think it's a good thing to chop out the boring bits! Henry James called *War and Peace* a baggy monster, which meant it had

things that James and modern critics would say shouldn't be in novels at all: essays about history and philosophy and the theory of war, Tolstoy's opinions, arguments with other historians. And you don't need any of that as long as ideas emerge through characters, and you can make that happen.'

But we haven't yet reached an end of Davies's liberties with Tolstoy. He spent three years wrestling the book into shape for the small screen. 'Eventually I took a pair of kitchen scissors and opened up the spine of the paperback and cut it through the middle. I could carry a chunk of it around in my jacket pocket quite easily after that.'

Did he offer up a silent apology to Tolstoy? 'I did feel a bit guilty about it. I was brought up to be respectful to books. But I felt a wicked thrill about cutting the greatest book of all time into pieces.'

He says it's an illusion to imagine that any adaptation can be faithful. 'It's always different, according to when it's done, who's doing it. Even the reading of a book is different from one person to another. It's a collaboration between the author and the reader. I used to be an English teacher and I used to say to students, "Isn't this a wonderful book?" This adapting job is a bit like that, but with millions of pounds of special effects.'

Davies launched Colin Firth's career, with

that clinging wet chemise in *Pride and Prejudice*. 'He's always very charming when I run into him but I can't help feeling that he's a bit irritated about having his career linked with this one part, in which he was so wonderful.'

Surely Davies receives a cheque from the actor every year. 'That doesn't happen, unfortunately. He looks as though he's all right for a few bob, but then so am I.' Indeed, Davies is reputedly the highest paid screenwriter in the business, with a long line of credits including *Bleak House* and *Tipping the Velvet*. A Davies screenplay is seldom knocked back, one imagines. What the writer taps out in Warwickshire tends to be what ends up on television sets around the country, more or less unchanged. 'I can write "70,000 men engage in a furious battle, with bodies flying through the air and enormous explosions" and I'll cheerfully stop working and go and have lunch. It's not my job to make it look like this is happening on screen.' But what does he say to the newspapers who accuse him of gratuitous rumpy-pumpy in his work?

'I sometimes get a bit annoyed but it doesn't usually last long. Sex is terribly interesting to everybody and it does help to sell shows, so even if the coverage is exaggerated in the papers, it usually does help with audience figures.'

Has he ever turned in a script and had the producer on the phone, demanding to know where all the fruity bits are? Davies laughs. 'I don't recall anybody doing that, no.'

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War and Peace continues on Sundays at 9 p.m. on BBC1.

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## Cinema

### On the money Deborah Ross

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#### The Big Short

15, Nationwide

*The Big Short* is a drama about the American financial collapse of 2008. It talks you through sub-prime mortgages, tranches, credit-default swaps, mortgage-backed securities, collateralized debt obligations... and, yes, I just bored myself to tears typing that list. I had to prop my eyes open with matchsticks typing that list. I would even propose that I was more bored typing that list than I've ever been in my whole life, which is saying something, as I saw *Monuments Men*. And, previously, I would have proposed that there is no way you could ever make any of the above fascinating or compelling or sexy, let alone scathingly funny. But *The Big Short* is fascinating, sexy, compelling and scathingly funny. It's a miracle. It's a lesson to *The Revenant*; a lesson that says: hey, dude, did you know that in the right hands a bear market can be more

exciting than an actual bear? Did you?

It is directed and written by Adam McKay, who has made countless comedies with Will Ferrell (*Anchorman*, *Talladega Nights*, etc.) but that's OK, because I have a fondness for Will Ferrell comedies, which are often more intelligent than they seem. This is an adaptation of the 2010 non-fiction book by Michael Lewis (interviewed on p18), which followed the handful of Wall Streeters who saw where the American economy was going, and heard the apocalyptic trumpets way before anyone else did. They're the ones who spotted the sub-prime debt (look!; look how I'm familiar with all these words now!) and bet against the housing market — I think you'll find this is known as 'shorting' — and they're the ones who made a ton of money. They're the winners. I suppose. Kind of. If there are any winners. There are certainly no heroes. That is made abundantly clear.

These individuals did not know each other, and never met, so we follow their stories individually. You have to know who they are, so let's get this over with quickly. There is Michael Burry (Christian Bale), a one-eyed hedge-fund manager who has Asperger's and is into heavy metal. There is Jared Vennett (Ryan Gosling), an ambitious young gun who can smell money on entering a room and who tips off another hedge-fund manager, Mark Baum (Steve Carell, wearing a wig of Ron Burgundy-level terribleness). And, lastly, it's two wet-behind-the-ear chaps from Colorado (John Magaro, Finn Wittrock) who are mentored by a retired Wall Street tycoon (Brad Pitt, at his most Robert Refordish; I would even moot that Brad Pitt is better at doing mid-life Robert Redford than Robert Redford ever was).

*The Big Short* isn't *Wolf of Wall Street*. This isn't about the culture of excess and those cocaine-fuelled parties, although there is some of that. And this isn't *99 Homes*, as it's not about the human cost, although there is also some of that. Instead, this wants us to understand what happened and why, which is a tall order. It knows it is a tall order. It knows it has to be outrageously entertaining, or die, and it is outrageously entertaining. It is snappy. It uses montage, irony and popular culture references. The script is great. Here is a character's first impression of a banking conference in Las Vegas: 'It's like someone hit a piñata full of white people who suck at golf.' And one conceit has Jared addressing us directly, with teasing acknowledgments along the lines of 'Yes, we know you don't understand it. No one does. So here's Margot Robbie in a bubble bath to explain', and, blow me, if we don't then cut directly to Margot Robbie in a bubble bath, explaining sub-prime lending. So, so clever.

And it doesn't matter if you don't understand much — I probably didn't understand that much — as it works anyhow, and you'll still get, for instance, why Goldman Sachs

thinks Burry is insane for wanting to bet against housing, and why they laugh at him while still being prepared to do business with him. You'll get, too, Baum's mounting sense of horror as he begins to realise the rating agencies are in the bank's pockets. And you'll get how all these complex financial tools were devised to keep the rich rich while screwing over the little guy, particularly when Baum takes a trip to Florida to check out the sub-prime market for himself, and discovers deserted properties, tenants still paying rent to landlords even though the landlords are no longer paying the mortgages, corrupt realtors signing up immigrants who don't know what they're signing for and also (because McKay has a terrific sense of the absurd) an alligator that will take you rather by surprise.

This is one of those films that keeps you interested in a subject you imagined you had no interest in. It is improbably compelling, while the performances (especially Bale and Carell) are smoking hot. Plus, it will fill you with a righteous anger. Although the behaviour of the banks was criminally outrageous, and led to ordinary people's lives being ruined, only one banker ever went to prison, and now it's back to business as usual, or so it would appear... oh God, it sounds so boring on paper, but here's a plan: just go see it. And go see it now.

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## Theatre

### Pride and prejudice Lloyd Evans

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#### The Long Road South

King's Head, until 30 January

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#### This Will End Badly

Southwark Playhouse, until 6 February

Paul Minx ventures boldly into Tennessee Williams country with *The Long Road South*. It's 1965 and the Price family are idling about at home in Indiana. In mid-August the air is heavy with frustrated sexuality. Carol Ann Price (Imogen Stubbs) is a kindly, buxom waster slithering decorously into alcoholic dereliction. Her daughter, Ivy, is a perky little menace who cavorts about the lawn in a skimpy bikini trying to elicit male attention. Jake, the patriarch, is a charmless redneck with anger problems and a secret backlog of unpaid debt. Waiting on these white-trash parasites are two black servants, Andre and Grace, who are smart, industrious, even-tempered and limitlessly patient. Andre is a gifted theologian who pines after his severely disabled daughter. Grace is an ambitious author from New York who scribbles away at her latest novel while doubling as the Prices' maidservant.

Even more remarkable is the distribu-

tion of ethnic prejudice in this household. The Prices are affected by the full spectrum of racial intolerance but Grace and Andre address not a single word of anti-white hostility towards their crass employers. Is this unbelievable? Andre even convinces himself that the Prices regard him as a family member even though he's required to drink water from a separate cup. When he asks Jake for his wages, the money is thrown at him in small coins, which bounce off his proud and unbending torso and fall to earth around his noble feet. The author seems to be treating his characters differently according to the colour of their skin. Dramatically, the plan misfires because the vividly flawed Prices are much easier to like than the high-minded Andre or the pompous Grace.

The taste for this sort of retro-drama in which antique bigotries are presented for the titillation of modern audiences began with the TV soap *Mad Men*. Every male character was a chain-smoking bottom-pinch with blatantly sexist and anti-Semitic views. The unexamined premise was that

*This is retro-drama that, like Mad Men, presents antique bigotries for the titillation of modern audiences*

the prejudices of the 1960s were extinct and therefore safe to be publicly aired. And yet the desire to incarnate and inspect them afresh suggests that they retained some of their allure. The get-out clause is that the viewer today watches with a detached and sophisticated eye. But I wonder. There's a difference between being prejudiced and being a connoisseur, or archivist, of prejudice but it's an uncomfortable line to draw.

*This Will End Badly* starts badly. A lone urban male tethered to the loo in his one-bedroom flat bemoans the disappearance of his girlfriend. Her departure has triggered a loss of cloacal control. But once he moves away from constipation, he becomes darkly and grippingly entertaining. Suicidal thoughts obsess him. The worst feeling in the world, he says, is to wake up knowing that you tried to end your life and failed. 'Don't do it,' he counsels. Only one in 25 attempts ends successfully in death.

The rapid-fire script broadens out into a trio of voices, Misery Guts, Meat Cute and This Pain. Brutal and accurate reflections on male sexuality pile up. Meat Cute, a womanising prowler, reveals that men fetishise particular regions of the female anatomy (ankles, calves, necks, collar bones) and that they obsessively court women who bear these corporeal quirks without ever sharing the secret with the chatelaine of the erotic landmark. This is true. Less convincing is his belief that today's sexual practices are influenced by internet porn, which gives them an indelible tincture of hatred and misogyny. Men, he claims, force their reluctant womenfolk to enact scenarios of submission

learned online. And the females meekly comply with instructions from their betters. Well hardly. Romantic love could never be the slave of internet porn. And no woman would tolerate, let alone encourage, a boyfriend who plainly despised females in general and herself in particular. 'Darling, I love the way you loathe me. Let's get married and live hatefully ever after.'

Aside from that blip, the show is a stark and dazzling examination of the tortured male soul, and it has so much eloquent potency that the writer, Rob Hayes, must wonder why it hasn't leapt immediately into the realm of international popularity. Well, it's not a perfect night out. A monologue is tougher for an audience than a proper play. The focus is rather narrow, and the characters, for all their sweeping rhetoric and powers of observation, are short of humour, softness or warmth. And the structure is unsatisfying. The show ends suddenly, in mid-sentence, with a big flash of explosives where a note of measured artistic resolution would be better.

Ben Whybrow gives a virtuoso display in the three roles. The show runs for just over an hour but the script would consume 150 minutes of stage-time if enacted at newsreader speed. It's a monumental feat of memory and performance by a sensational talent.

## Dance

### Turkish delight

Ismene Brown

#### Le Corsaire

English National Ballet, Coliseum, in rep until 24 January

I've seen some people saying that English National Ballet's *Le Corsaire* is so out-of-date it's risible to see it staged in the 21st century. Sex trafficking, men in black with scimitars in Istanbul, pirates trading slaves across the Mediterranean, rich fat men rubbing their jewelled paws over fresh young bodies — pshaw indeed!

But I'd like to have heard Tamara Rojo, ENB's artistic director, pitch to her board and sponsors to get the shiploads of doubloons she needed to stage it with the bling and panache its spectacle requires. An even tougher sell might have been getting her multiracial dancers on board with playing slaves and slave-dealers. So yes, I reckon *Le Corsaire* is bang-on current as a project.

The front curtain tells us the unlikely fact that the story is based on Lord Byron's poem about the buccaneering corsair — fortunately not a whit more respectfully than the *Don Quixote* ballet of about the same period is based on Cervantes. That is, it simply provides any excuse for exotic scenery and exultantly energetic classical

dancing — hokum and proud of it.

Bob Ringwood's Istanbul vista and his succulent costumes are worth the ticket price alone; and the music, knocked up with brazen theatricality from contributions by ten composers, performs that vital but rarely found function of seizing you by the ears and telling you exactly what to feel — 'Pay attention! This is going to be exciting!' orders the overture; 'They're all doomed!' warns the Act 3 prelude.

There are useful similarities to *This is Spinal Tap*, in which a boyband — here, the pirates led by Conrad — has its emotional ecology disturbed by a woman — here Medora — with the subsequent wrecking of the boyband. Medora's destiny, to be a harem slave, is shared, less resistingly, by her best friend Gulnara, whose role supplies the traditional mid-19th-century second ballerina of contrasting qualities, and thus ensures a banquet of starry solo work. An act of God ensures that Gulnara pays a price for giving in too easily, which appeases the moralists.

Over 150-plus years the ballet has been pirated and resampled so many times that it has hardly an authentic leg to stand on. Anna-Marie Holmes's version for ENB is based on one the Bolshoi junked in 1995, refreshed with a Western sense of humour to replace the evil villain Pasha with a cuddly, comic one. This saves the story, giving it over entirely to frolicsome charm and a focus on its fetching choreography, a palimpsest of 19th-century classical petit point with the broader, eye-catchingly acrobatic strokes of Soviet preferences.

Don't ask what delicate French waltzes are doing in a slave market, just enjoy the crystalline choreography where three odalisques in bare midriffs and tutus perform an exquisite episode of original Petipa choreography. The later liking for hunky male roles — Conrad and Birbanto heading the pirates, the muscular slave-dealer Lankendem, the mysterious bare-chested Ali, and cohorts of corsairs and Ottoman security guards — ensures an unstoppable stream of competitive male leaping, in which ENB now offers far more excitement than its rival over in Covent Garden.

Ballet doesn't come more Darwinian than the first night's pas de trois, when Tamara Rojo, new Cuban recruit Osiel Gouneo and junior Cesar Corrales burned up the stage with rival fireworks. Does it take Latin dancers to show the British that, in classical ballet, technical dazzle isn't vulgar, it's vital? Indeed, there was too much nervous flashiness from Gouneo, but I suspect that once ENB's balletmaster Irek Mukhamedov gets his hands on him, this big natural talent will refine himself, as the terrific Corrales is already doing.

Man of the match on the first night, though, was a stunning American guest as slave-trader Lankendem, Brooklyn Mack, who finished every exultant leap with a



# peter brown



Eros' Wet Steps, Piccadilly Circus, Rain, 2015 oil on canvas 76 x 89 cms 30 x 35 ins

Peter's images of our capital are neither strictly topographical as, say, those by the eighteenth-century artist Thomas Shottor Boys. Nor, despite their clear human interest, are they quite Hogarthian. But there is nevertheless a touch of both artists in his work.

Architecturally, his paintings are exacting impressions of a bustling community going about its business in all weathers. Working quickly, he is able to catch the very essence of the moment, making his pictures highly skilled impressions of everyday city life. But each painting has a personal touch, because Peter engages with his audience, often to such a degree that passersby return, hoping to find themselves included within the scene. DM

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Signed copies of Peter Brown's new book are available in the Gallery – £35.

## MESSUM'S

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deep-bending finish as soft as silk, and even in ENB's testosterone-rich corridors he would be an ornament.

While Rojo the director is making seriously good decisions about increasing the quality and motivation in ENB's male section, she is visibly as a ballerina influencing a rise in refinement among the women too. Great ballerinas don't just speak classical fluently, they enunciate it with relish for its idioms and cut-glass footwork. Rojo does this, as does Alina Cojocaru (currently absent with a nasty injury). A host of ENB women are showing us newly discovered fastidiousness, including Laurretta Summerscales, Ksenia Ovsyanick, Rina Kanehara, Alison McWhinney, Madison Keesler, Shiori Kase and Anjuli Hudson.

There is a vibrancy on stage at ENB now, which may go OTT occasionally — and yes, Rojo certainly needs to establish a unifying company style, particularly for the men — but *Le Corsaire* declares that ballet is very much alive in the 21st century in this sharp-witted troupe.

## Music

### Age concern

Damian Thompson

Daniel Barenboim back at the Festival Hall! Cue *The Grand March of the Musical Luvvies Across Hungerford Bridge*, a bustling overture by Karl Jenkins in which a trombone farts out the epigrams of Simon Callow and the violas mimic the gentle swing of David Mellor's shoulder-length bob — modelled, I'm told, on Anna Ford's barnet c.1982. Jolly fine it looked, too, on Sunday night.

Barenboim doesn't have much hair these days, but baldness suits him. Sixty years after his RFH debut, as a 13-year-old playing Mozart under Joseph Krips, he has the same baby-pink skin as Winston Churchill in old age. He also shares Churchill's belief in his own indestructibility. Is there any other 73-year-old in the world who would play both of Brahms's piano concertos in one evening? And more or less get away with it?

Of course it helped that the audience, like Churchill's adoring public during his 'Indian summer', had their ears cocked for rhetorical grandeur rather than geriatric fluffs. Barenboim was lavish with both. Surprisingly, he was more secure technically — and had more to say musically — in the Second Piano Concerto, whose nightmare intervals are at least easier to hide in the concertante texture.

I couldn't help wondering, though, whether Barenboim — a great conductor who should have got the Berlin Phil instead of Rattle — was really all that happy hiding inside a provincial orchestra from Venezue-

la. A ludicrous pairing, on the face of it, but then this was the Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra conducted by Gustavo Dudamel.

The latter is now music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic but is still in charge of the Bolivar, supposedly full of rescued street kids transformed into world-class instrumentalists by the magic of Venezuela's El Sistema tuition. I gather that, the night before, the orchestra gave a heartfelt performance of Messiaen's *Turangalila symphonie*. 'Brothel music', the late Pierre Boulez unfairly called it, though perhaps his words resonated with some of the players, given widespread reports (refuted by El Sistema) of the predatory abuse of pupils by its teachers.

For the Brahms, of course, the Bolivars were thinned down — 'cute kids to the fore to keep the luvvies happy,' said one cynical music critic. And happy they were, judging by the Soviet-style standing ovations. Yet I've never heard the first concerto's main subject, once described as 'shouting defiance at a troubled sky', sound so perfunctory.

Dudamel's fault? Hard to say. All evening he beat time with textbook gestures that looked as if they were designed to keep a

### Was Barenboim happy hiding inside a provincial orchestra from Venezuela?

student band from going off the rails. He was certainly right not to give any leeway to the violins, whose thin sound resembled nothing so much as a clumsily de-hissed remastering of a 1940s orchestra.

He also needed to semaphore the downbeats because Barenboim kept slowing to a tempo more suited to Morton Feldman than to Brahms. This allowed him to give us the 'burnished' effect that older pianists often fall back on; there were moments, especially in the slow movement of the second concerto, when his fingers produced more tonal colour than the entire orchestra combined.

The other advantage of playing slowly is that there are fewer wrong notes. This wasn't one of those evenings where you sit cringing, waiting for the next clunker. (That's Maurizio Pollini's speciality.) Barenboim's management of his limitations was mostly skilful, except when he slammed down the sustaining pedal to blur his erratic fingerwork. Even then, those of us familiar with the concertos could straighten out the rhythms in our heads. But imagine if you were an 11-year-old hearing the D minor concerto for the first time. This isn't 'autumnal' Brahms. It's a virtuoso tour de force in which the young composer uses tiny details of counterpoint to whip up excitement. That wasn't what we heard.

I left my seat quickly in order to avoid the lifetime-Oscar histrionics in the auditorium. As a result, I missed Daniel Barenboim's post-encore speech, in which he held forth on 'the ongoing importance of El Sis-

tema as a humanitarian project'.

I did, however, pass the Foyles stall selling Barenboim and Dudamel CDs along with (presumably) the only book they could find on El Sistema. It's by Geoff Baker, subtitled 'Orchestrating Venezuela's Youth', and examines in detail all the charges of sexual abuse, political manoeuvring and musical deceit levelled against the mysterious 'system'. One wonders how many members of the audience, hands raw from clapping, gave it so much as a glance.

## Radio

### All in the mind

Kate Chisholm

You don't expect to be brought close to tears by the *Reith Lectures*, which are after all at the most extreme end of Radio 4's commitment to 'educating' its audience. Yet when Stephen Hawking delivered this year's talks at the Royal Institution in London (in front of a lucky audience of listeners and scientists) there was both much laughter and a heightened sense of emotion.

This was not because of his plight — the eminent professor of theoretical physics has suffered from a rare form of motor neurone disease since the age of 21 and the only discernible movement in his body is in his eyes, and the twitching of his facial muscles. Nor his cheeky sense of humour, or his grace and dignity, although these are remarkable enough. It's not even the way he has continued to work, undaunted by the obstacles presented by his illness, dependent now on those facial twitches as the only way he can make himself understood. No, what really impresses beyond words is the way he has used his most unusual intellectual capacity not just to pursue his ideas about the cosmos but to find new ways of living day-by-day, and thereby to show others suffering also from neuro-degenerative disorders what is still possible when so much else is lost. He challenges us all to recognise what we could and might be.

Even though what we heard was not Hawking but the sound of a totally synthetic voice, manufactured by technology from the slightest of movements, his character shone through everything he said. His thoughts could only be made plain to us through painstaking work by him, word for word, at a rate of about one word per minute, combined with state-of-the-art artifice. And yet we did feel as if a real connection had been made, that he was speaking directly to us. Just witness the applause that came at the end.

His subject was the black holes that have dominated his research career, those as yet unknowable areas of dark matter, unpentrated by the light, into which anything that



falls will not escape. They are, says Hawking, the most fascinating aspect of cosmology because of their very existence, and their unknowability. Much more than that, though, Hawking shows us that it is only when we think beyond our earthly limits, our human confines, that we can be said to be truly human.

In the question-and-answer session that followed his talk, Hawking was asked what inspires him to keep going, to which he replied: 'My expectations when I turned 21 were reduced to zero. In this situation it was important to appreciate what I did have.' He went on to explain that he has been 'fortunate in almost everything else' and especially to work in theoretical physics at such an exciting time. 'It's important not to get angry,' he said. 'You can lose all hope if you can't laugh at yourself and at life.' The first of the two lectures (presented by Sue Lawley and produced by Jim Frank) goes out next Tuesday. Don't miss them. You might not afterwards be able to explain why it's important not to fall into a black hole, but you will have been given the hope that all is not lost if by mischance you do.

On Thursday of this week Radio Five Live extended its usual remit into the far reaches of one of the largest and most up-to-date hospitals in the UK, Queen Elizabeth in Birmingham, made famous by Malala Yousafzai who was sent there for treatment in 2012 after she was shot and severely wounded in Pakistan. The idea was to provide 'a snapshot of a day in the life' of the hospital by taking Five Live's microphones inside for 24 hours and talking to patients and staff, from the chief executive to the cleaner.

Like flies on the wall we spent time inside the operating theatre as one patient underwent surgery on cancer of the jaw. We could hear the monitors beeping in the background but otherwise it sounded really normal. Not at all like the sterile, terrifying atmosphere you might expect. There was an underlying hum of conversation, just like in an office, as the dozen or so people actually involved in the operation talked about what was going on. It felt odd listening in, and realising this was their daily life, no chats around the watercooler or tantrums about computers that freeze.

For many of us our only acquaintance with hospital is fraught with exceptionalism, either our own rare encounter with an illness that requires hospitalisation or visiting someone who is ill. By taking us inside the experience in a way that just could not be done on TV (it would be too intrusive for patients and also for doctors and surgeons), Radio Five Live hopes to build on the work it did last year by following a heart-transplant patient into the operating theatre, in real time, turning us from couch-potato followers of *Casualty* to active witnesses of true-life medicine.

## Television

### Class of '83

James Delingpole

No one remembers this now but there really was a period, not so long ago, when the Eighties were universally reviled as the 'decade that style forgot'.

For a time it got so bad that none of us survivors could even bear to look at old photos of ourselves: mullets, feather cuts, Limahl-style bleaching, pastels, legwarmers, unflattering suits so boxy they made you look broader than you were tall. . .

But try telling this to the kids today and they won't believe you. The Eighties, as far as they're concerned, are so achingly, incredibly, bleeding-edge cool that there's no way their parents could possibly have lived through them and, 'Oh, by the way, Dad, do you mind if I take that old jacket of yours back to school?' (That last quote is a lie by the way. They never ask. They just assume.)

So it's no wonder that *Deutschland 83* (Channel 4) has established itself as such

*East Germany did win the war in the end, only not quite in the way it planned*

a seductive Sunday night TV rival to *War and Peace*. Even if the drama were rubbish (which it's not, though it does teeter occasionally on the verge of silliness) you could just sit back and wallow in that echt early 1980s ambience: the haircuts, the charmingly old-fashioned geopolitical tensions, the thrill of encountering your first Walkman. . .

And, of course, that immaculate soundtrack. I don't remember at the time being particularly smitten by Duran Duran's 'Hungry Like The Wolf', let alone Bowie's 'China Girl'. But the intervening decades have lent them the patina of classics that can now happily rank with the Eighties stuff that was always good such as New Order's 'Blue Monday', Eurythmics' 'Sweet Dreams' and — I'm sorry — Nena's '99 Luftballons'.

The drama concerns a sweet-looking East German border guard Martin Rauch (Jonas Nay) who is recruited via his wicked aunt to work as a deep-cover spy as aide-de-camp to a West German general. Amazingly, Bundeswehr security is so lax that he is parachuted into a job with no questions asked, only the most rudimentary training and an understanding of the West so poor that he can barely even work the telephones. Despite all this Martin is accepted instantly and is free to spy at high-level conferences, breaking with relative ease into the hotel safes of senior diplomats, kung-fu fighting with hot Chinese agents disguised as waitresses, seducing important

secretaries, while arousing barely the slightest suspicion.

You accept this nonsense, though, because it's part of the series' distinctive tone: straight Cold War drama meets early James Bond meets Eighties pop video meets tongue-in-cheek comedy. I rather like it when writers are given their head to create a style all of their own. Another brilliant recent example of this was the second series of Mackenzie Crook's *Detectorists*, which I highly recommend you catch up with on BBC iPlayer.

*Deutschland 83* isn't sure what to make of the politics and neither are we. On the one hand we can see that the Commies are ruthless, brutal, cynical and rightly doomed to fail. On the other hand, there's something rather underdog-engaging about their grave, warped integrity, their relentless chain-smoking (everyone in the West has given up, apparently) and their bleak humour.

In the most recent episode, the Stasi bigwigs finally acquired some top secret information from the West only to be flummoxed by two major problems: first, they'd never seen a floppy disc before; secondly, they seemed to have only one very basic model of computer in the whole country — and it wasn't compatible with the disc.

No doubt there's a bit of dramatic licence here. I can believe the shambolic incompetence, but I suspect the real East Germany was a lot more dingy and sinister. Here, it's made to seem slyly sexy: at one point, a nubile blonde *Mädchen* skinny-dips in a pristine lake and offers up her body to her surprised but grateful male companion with his wispy moustache and crap washed denim jacket. Such back-to-nature free-spiritedness, we are given to understand, would never happen in the crass, commercial West where the furniture's all modern and the supermarkets are disgustingly full.

One of the odder aspects of living through history is the way things that mattered so very intensely at the time often come to seem, with hindsight, almost cute. This idea, for example, that we were all on the verge of being wiped out by a third world war: the characters in *Deutschland 83* are all obsessed with it, whereas for the viewer it's more an excuse for a fond, nostalgic chuckle.

That nostalgia isn't entirely misplaced. The West German general's hot daughter has gone to a hippie commune in Cologne. But it's almost impossible to watch those scenes now without muttering to yourself: 'Wouldn't fancy her chances much outside the railway station on New Year's Eve.' I sometimes think that the East did win the war in the end, only not quite in the way it planned. One of its agents — a female one called Angela — found a rather more subtle means of destroying Western civilisation than nukes, that's all.



# The Clare Valley

By Rebecca Weisser

It is a century and a half since *The Spectator* noted the exceptional qualities of South Australia, a colony of free settlers untainted — unlike the rest of the continent — by the convict stain. ‘Everywhere ... the enclosures over miles of plain, the hedged gardens, the well-grown orchards and well-appointed homesteads, proclaim the possession of the land by an industrious and thrifty yeomanry,’ wrote a Mr Wilson in these pages in 1866. ‘It is England in miniature, England without its poverty ... with a finer climate, a virgin soil ... more liberal institutions and a happier people.’

These days, alas, the ‘thrifty yeomanry’ has to support a ballooning public sector, and the state, once a manufacturing powerhouse, wrestles with Tasmania to stay out of last place in the league table of Australian prosperity. Yet this misfortune has an upside. There has been no money to demolish anything in South Australia — it’s like an antipodean Havana. The first place in the world to allow women to stand for parliament now feels like the land that time forgot.

This time warp is intoxicating in the Clare Valley, a wine region settled in 1840, only four years after the colony was proclaimed. In the 1840s, South Australia was described as a land of ‘chapels, bibles and religious enjoyment’, but don’t be deceived — as soon as



*Like southern France — with added kangaroos*

the Jesuits arrived (after being kicked out of Austria by the Habsburgs in 1848), they built the Sevenhill winery. It’s still going strong. Other settlers planted more vines and built sandstone homes and five small towns, none of which has been much changed since. Now there are almost 50 wineries — it’s southern France, but with added kangaroos. This is the home of Australian Riesling.

When a bush fire destroyed the old railway line, it was turned into a cycle route called the Riesling trail. This is a convenient way to tour cellar doors, sample wines and gourmet goodies, see the scenery and get slowly sozzled without running foul of Australia’s strict drink-driving laws.

Skillogalee is a winery with a restaurant in an old stone cottage in the prettiest landscape in the Clare. Sitting under the old olive tree in the garden, eating figs from the orchard washed down with a local Riesling and gazing out over the vines to the Skilly Hills is as good as it gets. If you can’t bear to leave, they have luxurious rooms for rent.

Yet the state’s impecuniosity casts a shadow. Beautiful Martindale Hall — a replica of a house in the Lake District with lake, cricket pitch, polo field and racecourse — was built by a lovelorn settler trying to persuade his fiancée to join him. She didn’t. Bequeathed to the state, it operated as a museum where you could sleep in the creaking heritage bedrooms. Now the cash-strapped government might sell it off to be turned into a spa and wedding centre. Martindale featured in *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and — like the ethereal schoolgirls in Peter Weir’s film — looks oddly out of place, as if it too has slipped through a wrinkle in space-time. Let’s hope that it won’t be destroyed.

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'I love Selfridges food hall because it seems to be a fifth columnist at war with the rest of the shop'  
— Tanya Gold, p62

# LIFE

## High life Taki



The death of David Bowie — how is it that Stephen Glover always gets it right about our over-reaction and hysteria when a pop star goes the way of all of us? — triggered a memory of something that happened long ago with Iman, his still beautiful widow. It was exactly 30 years ago, on a rainy and cold night in New York. But first, a brief background to the story.

In the winter of 1985 the mother of my children had taken them to Paris, to her mother's, as a warning to me that my constant womanising would no longer be tolerated. At the same time, an English friend of mine in London had run off with yet another friend, a male, thus making it obvious that I was about to lose both a wife and a mistress. Even more catastrophically, an English woman in New York was dropping hints about having a child, about as welcome at that point in my life as some North Africans are in Cologne nowadays.

Needing to be alone to think, I went for dinner at Mortimer's, a chic watering hole, now defunct, three blocks from my house on the Upper East Side. I had had a couple of bottles of wine and was starting to relax when André Leon Talley, a very tall and talented African American who works for *Vogue* — known to us as the African Queen — came into the place accompanied by a beautiful, and almost as tall, black lady. The place was jammed so I waved them over and they sat down to dinner with lonely old me. Her name was Iman, and she had recently arrived in the States having been discovered in deepest Africa by my good buddy Peter Beard, the photographer.

To call it a convivial dinner would be an understatement. I was in my cups and my guests were laughing at my predicament. I invited them over to my house for a drink but André had to work early and begged off. Iman agreed to one drink. We walked over to my house and when we got there I realised, to my horror, that I had not taken my keys out with me. Worse, I had told the

live-in help to take the night off as I had not planned to go out. The terror mounted after I failed to break the door down by kicking it hard on the lock. As I became more and more desperate, Iman started to get scared. I found a crowbar nearby and began to chop away at the damn door whereupon she ran off and jumped into a passing taxi. Just then the door gave in. There I was with a door I could not shut — the crime rate was still very high in the Bagel — and Iman had fled the scene. On top of all my other problems. The poor little Greek boy never had it so bad.

The African Queen and I have laughed about this many times. Iman I never met again, but the producer Michael White once

### *Will Iman give me a second chance before I die?*

brought David Bowie to the Eagle club and I sat with them on the terrace. I think I told the story and Bowie could not have been more polite when he heard it. But a genius, as the ghastly Tony Blair called him? I doubt it. The gushing after his death would have made a true genius blush, but such are the joys of living in a world in which pop stars outweigh writers, and businessmen who shuffle money around outrank scientists who invent life-saving processes.

And speaking of businessmen, but one who creates jobs, what about good old Rupert Murdoch, and his future bride Jerry Hall, a Texan I met long ago, when she was Bryan Ferry's squeeze. Rupert came to mind when I read that the 100-year-old *New Republic* was up for sale again. I'll be brief: *TNR* is a leftie weekly that was bought by a young billionaire partner of Mark Zuckerberg, of Facebook infamy. Chris Hughes, who is married to another man, is the American co-founder of Facebook. He is

an effete leftie type who announced that his billions would transform *TNR* into a digital giant. Yes, and Iman and I had a long night of passion in New York 30 years ago. What bullshit.

Hughes tried to get his husband elected to Congress, failed, then lost 20 million greenbacks in one year trying to make *The New Republic* relevant. Twenty million is peanuts in the newspaper business. It should also be peanuts to a 32-year-old with sudden riches from what is, as far as I am concerned, a dubious invention that was most likely borrowed from two naive Wasps at Harvard. So he threw in the towel and *TNR* is up for sale. This is where Rupert Murdoch, the 84-year-old future blushing groom, comes in.

The Australian may at times play dirty but he's lost double that amount in each of the 40 or so years he's been keeping the best New York newspaper alive. That's what billionaires should be doing, keeping great papers like *The New York Post* — founded by Alexander Hamilton — going. And that's the difference between a Rupert Murdoch and a Chris Hughes. One's a tough Aussie who creates, the other is an effete American who bought a toy that he broke. Give me the Australian any day.

My only hope now lies with Iman. Will she give me a second chance before I die? One thing is for sure: this time I will have my keys with me.

## Low life Jeremy Clarke



Putting old or contaminated petrol in a car needn't be catastrophic, but in the Golf's case it was. With 37,000 miles on an 07 plate, it was a tight, solid little car before I accidentally wrecked it. Someone offered £300 for scrap, and I was about to sadly take it, when a pal pointed out that one second-hand Golf door alone costs £300 from a scrapyards. He urged me instead to buy a second-hand Golf engine for a few hundred quid and simply 'drop it in' — as he so persuasively put it. He even found a buyer for a Golf thus renovat-





ed who was guaranteeing trade price sight unseen.

I'm no mechanic. So I made a few calls and found Roy. Roy was available and he had enough confidence in his abilities to set a price for the job that seemed as unbelievably low as the trade dealer's offer was high. Ordering a used 07 Golf engine from a nationwide scrap dealers' website was as straightforward as ordering Michel Houellebecq's latest from Amazon Prime. Roy and I set the day (Saturday) and the hour (10 o'clock) for him to come and do the work.

On Saturday morning, Roy's white Berlingo van swung punctually into the drive. He got out and went straight to work, like a worker ant emerging from the egg. There in the garage was the engine sitting on a pallet. And there on the drive was the 07 Golf. He needed no further cues. Standing in my slippers and dressing-gown, cradling my kick-start coffee, I observed his purposefulness and confident expertise with unreserved admiration from an upstairs window.

Then I showered and dressed, made more coffee, and took a mug of it to him outside. His head was under the bonnet, buried deep in the engine vault. The cylinder head was off already and he was ratcheting away with his telescopic wrench. 'Coffee, Roy?' I said. He stood up, accepted his mug and took a grateful sip. 'How's it going?' I said.

'So far, so good. I might need a hand later to lift the new engine in,' he said. He was in his mid-thirties and tall. The face was friendly and intelligent with a neat, thin beard arrangement. Vowels, modulation, diction and vocabulary were moulded by one of the middle classes.

He eyed me over the rim of his mug, placing me as I was placing him. 'What do you do for a living?' he said. I said that I was a sort of journalist, and this seemed to greatly excite his imagination. Quick-fire supplementary questions followed, such as how did an ordinary chap like me come to be one? And, which publications did I write for? I began to wish I'd said meat packer, which is what I usually say when the pointed question arises. Conversation tends to move on from meat packer (night shift) much more quickly. Now Roy began a ruth-

### *I quickly reformed my image of John Major from gentle cricket lover to Master of the Universe*

less examination of me as someone who is, or should be, 'in the know'.

'Islamic State,' he said. 'That's Isis, right? You're a journalist. What does Isis really stand for?' I looked blank. Counting off the initials on his oily fingers, he said, 'Israeli Secret Intelligence Service.' I mimed an involuntary step backwards. 'No really. It's an Israeli organisation. The head of Isis is an Israeli. It's well known. The creation of Isis is a brilliant plan by the Israelis to destabilise the Middle East. Didn't you know?' I promised Roy I'd google it.

But that wasn't all. 'And surely you must know,' he said, 'that the world is run by a small secret cabal concealed within, and largely comprised of, the executive of the European Union?' I said, 'You must think me terribly ignorant, Roy, but I'm afraid I didn't. Anyone I might have heard of?' Roy hesitated before divulging a name with a flourish, as if the mere mention of it would make the scales fall from my eyes. 'John Major,' he said. Quickly reforming my mental image of our former prime minister from gentle cricket lover to Master of the Uni-

verse, I said, 'Well, no wonder he turned down that peerage, Roy.' 'Once you start to question things,' said Roy, regarding me with a gnomish intensity, 'everything falls into place. What do you know about the Jesuits, for example?' I shook my head apologetically. And so for the next hour, with startling prolixity, but without pause, he told me the real history of the world, which seems to hinge above all on the ulterior motives of the Jesuits, the Knights Templar, the Knights of Malta, the European Union executive, and most obscurely of all on the mystical powers of the Stone of Scone. I couldn't get a word in edgewise, even to excuse myself for a moment. But the Golf is now back to its former tight, nippy self. And, Sir John Major: we're watching you.

## Real life

### Melissa Kite



When in India, I always appal my highly educated tour guides. They despair of me, as they drag me round the cultural sights, trying to force education and refinement into me as I lounge about on the walls outside temples soaking up the atmosphere.

This trip was no different. My guide had come to pick me up bright and early from the Hyatt in the business district of Calcutta where I had been staying for a three-day economic summit.

I had arranged for a further three days of what the tour operators refer to as R&R before I headed back to London. India is one of my favourite destinations but I am a lazy so-and-so when it comes to sightseeing. All I want to do is wander about watching beautiful women wash clothes in rivers. Then a Bengali drummer in the evening and I'm set.

The tour operators fail to understand this. They imagine that what westerners really want when they visit India is to see the remnants of the empire. They fail to realise that number one, we have plenty of Victorian buildings in England. And number two, even if these Victorian buildings are particularly spectacular, once we have seen one vast red-brick pile that was once the seat of colonial government we have seen them all.

When I visited Chennai — which the locals urged me to call Madras, because they didn't want me to stand on politically correct ceremony on their account — I particularly enjoyed the church with the monument to a British army officer eaten by a tiger. It sim-



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ply said: 'Eaten by a tiger'. Let's face it, no matter how much we try, none of us is going to get ourselves an epitaph as good as that.

In Calcutta — which I was urged by my hosts not to call Kolkata to my heart's content, for truly they believed these semantic problems had been invented by Brits for Brits to have a row about — my tour guide wanted to show me 'the black hole of Calcutta'.

Slight problem: it isn't there any more. We drove past a cheerful white building and the guide announced that formerly this had been the place where Mughal troops imprisoned 146 British soldiers in a small dungeon, causing most of them to suffocate.

Then onwards to the vast red-brick pile that had once been the seat of ... I know, I know, I thought.

'Here it is!' he said proudly, gesturing to Writers' Building, which once housed all the bureaucrats. 'You take photos?'

It looked like the University of Manchester but I said yes, scrambled out of the car and clicked the iPhone in its general direction.

When I got back in, the tour guide looked at me sceptically. He knew I was a philistine who only wanted to casually soak up atmosphere. As we drove past the old grand hotel,

*I sat in the children's play area with my trousers pushed up round my knees like a true Englishman*

half a dozen horses blazed past us on the racetrack on the other side of the road, their jockeys bobbing in bright colours.

'Oh, the races!' I exclaimed, looking in the wrong direction. The guide gave me a rapid-fire history of how the cream of society went there during the Raj.

More Victorian architecture followed, the guide getting feisty about my lack of picture-taking as he pointed out a Rubens in a dusty old palace full of exotic birds, for some reason. 'Why is that one in such a small cage?' I asked, fretting over a parrot.

He sighed heavily at my irrelevance as I made him ask the caretaker. 'Apparently he is new,' he reported back crossly. 'They will be moving him to one of the big cages when he has got used to it. Please, in here there is a painting by. ...'

But I was wandering out into the sun, turning my face up to the heat and thinking dreamy thoughts.

Maybe there would be a pool at the next hotel. The one at the Hyatt had been closed for essential maintenance and the sunbeds were under covers. So I sat in the children's play area with my trousers pushed up round my knees like a true Englishman.

No one there could understand why I would want to sit in the midday heat when there was a perfectly good air-conditioned lobby to relax in.

Next year, I am thinking of being honest with the tour operator from the start: please,

I will say, just drive me through some chaotic streets so I can take pictures of people in bright clothing selling onions, then deposit me by a pool and put a club soda in my hand and a marigold garland over my head and leave me for five days.

I might call it imperialism 2.0, because they will then be only too pleased to indulge it.

## Long life Alexander Chancellor



Here I go again. I have stopped smoking. Until recently I had been smoking about 40 cigarettes a day, but it is now two weeks since I last had one. Initially I used e-cigarettes and nicotine lozenges to help me give up, but now I already feel I can manage without them. I think I may have conquered my addiction. I feel I could be free at last. But I hesitate to say so, because it is a feeling I have often had before. Like Mark Twain, I have often stopped smoking, but always after a period of time, even one as long as five years, I have taken it up again.

If one wants to stop smoking, one really should try to avoid reading Mark Twain, because his enthusiasm for it is infectious. In his *Sketches, New and Old*, published in 1875, he attacked someone he called 'the moral statistician' for 'always ciphering out how much a man's health is injured and how much his intellect is impaired, and how many pitiful dollars and cents he wastes ... in the fatal practice of smoking', while at the same time being 'blind to the fact that most old men in America smoke and drink coffee, although according to your theory, they ought to have died young; and that hearty old Englishmen drink wine and sur-



'... his wife would eat no lean, no dairy, no grains, no wheat, no gluten, no soya, no lactose, no refined sugar, no nuts, no yeast, no ...'

vive it, and portly old Dutchmen both drink and smoke freely, and yet grow older and fatter all the time'.

This moral statistician, said Twain, had never tried to find out 'how much solid comfort, relaxation, and enjoyment a man derives from smoking in the course of a lifetime, nor the appalling aggregate of happiness lost in a lifetime by your kind of people from not smoking'. Of course giving up smoking would save you money, he wrote, but 'all the use that money can be put to is to purchase comfort and enjoyment in this life; therefore, as you are an enemy of comfort and enjoyment, where is the use of accumulating cash?' 'What is the use of your saving money that is so utterly worthless to you?' he asked. 'In a word, why don't you go off somewhere and die?'

Twain nevertheless gave up smoking lots of times, though I'm not quite clear why he bothered. For he said that he had always enjoyed robust health, even when smoking 300 cigars a month, and that abstinence had not improved it 'because it was not possible to improve health that was already perfect'. Furthermore, he found cigar-smoking 'the best of all inspirations for the pen' and crucial to his performance as a writer.

Twain said he hadn't 'a particle of confidence in a man who has no redeeming petty vices', and I tend to agree with him about this. I also share his view that longevity for its own sake is the least worthy of human aspirations. So why, then, am I giving up smoking again? It's not that I disapprove of it, nor even that I fear it is going to kill me (though I accept that it might). It's because the 'comfort, relaxation and enjoyment' that Twain found in it are becoming unachievable today.

There is almost nowhere outside the home where you are allowed to smoke any more; and now, after many years of working at home, that I have an office job again, I can't have a cigarette without venturing out of doors at much inconvenience and in all weathers. And even where smoking is still permitted by law it can be challenging. Not long ago I was loudly abused by a woman in a bus queue for smoking a cigarette in the open air. These are dispiriting experiences, inimical to comfort, relaxation or enjoyment.

Then there is the question of cost. Now that you can get a perfectly good bottle of wine for the price of ten cigarettes, it seems much more sensible to make alcohol rather than tobacco your 'redeeming petty vice'. This is a particularly tempting way to cock a snook at the medical authorities who have just advised, astonishingly, that anyone drinking more than one small glass of wine a day is quite likely to get cancer. So in a way I regard giving up smoking as a defeat at the hands of the nanny state. Will I ever take it up again? I don't know, but I do now rather hope not.

## The turf

### Small wonder

Robin Oakley

Cheltenham, Ascot and Sandown Park are wonderful but without the little tracks racing would be lost. It was perishing cold — cold enough for brass monkeys to be keeping a watchful eye on their private parts — and the ground was heavy, but you could not have a better day's racing than Warwick gave us on Saturday.

I fuelled myself at the blue-and-white Whitby scampi stall, which would be a welcome presence on any track, and a fellow muncher set the tone: 'I only really come for the scampi,' he said. 'And I don't mind if I never back a winner.' But he was clearly enjoying himself, as were the punters huddling for warmth in the cosy betting hall — more of a snug than a 'hall' really — and tapping their feet between races to a lively three-man rock band in the grandstand. You don't get much closer to horses either than when they stretch down the all-weather strip in front of the Warwick stand on the way to the start.

The opening novice hurdle went to Bold Duke, ridden by 3lb claimer Ben Poste for the four-horse Herefordshire yard of Edward Bevan, and the second race went to the Alex Hales-trained Big Jim, the beneficiary of a bold ride from Kielan Woods, a young rider whom I have noted seizing his opportunities this season. With all his opponents giving him weight, Kielan led almost all the way on the strapping seven-year-old, putting pressure on the others down the back straight. When the ground is that heavy, catching front-runners isn't easy. It was the 17th winner this season for the youngster who rode 40 winners in his four years with Charlie Longsdon and now gets plenty of rides from Graeme McPherson as well as Hales and Ben Case.

These young riders have to graft for their opportunities — Big Jim was his only ride on the card, but Kielan insisted, 'Of course I'd love to have six rides but I'm not complaining.' He must be nearly six feet but doesn't have trouble doing light weights. 'I get to race most days at ten stone. I guess I've got light bones.' He rode 23 winners in his best season so far and already has 17 this season towards his new target of 30.

The day's big race, the Betfred Classic Chase over 3m 5f, was a real slog with only five of 14 runners completing but backers of the winner had an easy task picking him out all the way: Russe Blanc, who came over the last locked together with Midnight Prayer and went on to win by nearly four lengths, is not just a 50th shade of grey but actually white. His victory clinched a rare double for trainer Kerry Lee who has had just 23 runners since taking over from father Richard:

another of the 23 was Mountainous, who squelched home to win the Welsh National at Chepstow the previous weekend. 'It's down to happy horses,' she said.

Racegoers who brave conditions like last Saturday are happy souls too. They know their sport and enjoy success for the underdogs. Whether you can still apply that tag to Mark and Sara Bradstock after their success with Coneygree in last year's Cheltenham Gold Cup is a debatable point but theirs is still a small family operation with not many horses. One is Flintham, Coneygree's half-brother and full brother to Caruthers, one of the most popular jumpers in recent years. Flintham had disappointed in two runs over fences this season but reverting to hurdles he showed all the family tenacity to lead all the way and head off a late challenge to win at 7-1. I could not look the sweat-soaked Flintham in the eye in the winners' enclosure: more fool me, it was the first time in his career I hadn't backed him. 'They're an extraordinary family, so tough,' said a beaming Mark of Plaid Maid's offspring. 'They give everything and he stays for ever.' A chasing career will now wait until next season.

We owed it to Jane Hedley, conducting her first meeting as clerk of the course, and to the Warwick staff who were still rolling back the frost covers half an hour before, that we were racing at all and it wasn't just smaller stables that were grateful. Irish racing's superpower Willie Mullins had sent six runners to Warwick over the previous five years and scored four victories. On Saturday he had Black Hercules in the novice chase and two runners, Open Eagle and Thomas Hobson, in the novice hurdle. On only his second outing over fences nephew Danny Mullins rode the imposing Black Hercules with confidence, leading most of the way to win comfortably. He then repeated the front-running tactics on Thomas Hobson, previously a quirky jumper, to win the novice hurdle at a generous 5-1. Open Eagle, naturally, was second and those two are just spear carriers back home. No wonder serious punters are now taking 5-2 that Willie Mullins will be champion trainer in England too this season.



'When you've finished your colouring-in would you mind resuming the parental role?'

## Bridge

### Janet de Botton

The New Year got off to a great start with TGR's annual auction pairs, the best run tournament I have ever played and one of the most fun. It's matchpoint scoring, meaning every trick makes a difference — certainly not my forte as the pained face of my partner made clear every time I sloshed away an overtrick. My teammate Nick Sandqvist, playing with his regular partner Tom Townsend, showed how it's done when he magically led declarer astray on today's hand:

Dealer North

Love all

♠ K 9 4 3		♠ A Q 10 7
♥ K 4		♥ 10 9
♦ 10 9 7 4		♦ 8 3
♣ A 8 6		♣ Q 10 9 4 3
♠ J 6 5 2		
♥ A J 7 2		
♦ A J 5		
♣ 7 2		
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">           N W   E S         </div>	
		♠ 8
		♥ Q 8 6 5 3
		♦ K Q 6 2
		♣ K J 5

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♦	All pass	

Nick was West and led the ♣7. The start of the play was normal enough: declarer won in hand, led a Heart to the King and another one back, Tom (East) winning the 10 and playing another Club. South won in hand again, and tried a Spade to the King and Ace. East gave Nick a Club ruff, who then exited a Spade, ruffed by South.

The ruff has weakened the defence, and declarer is now in a position to make the contract, by simply ruffing the Hearts good with dummy's 9, 10 of Diamonds and knocking out the Ace of trumps.

But that is against an ordinary defender. When South played a small Heart from hand, Nick promptly produced the Ace of Hearts from his A,J! Declarer naturally asked for a small trump from dummy, and East scored an over ruff with the eight. That was the cake, and the icing was added when East played back yet another Club, promoting Nick's A,J of trumps into two tricks. Two down gave E/W 70 per cent, while 3♦ making would have given them only 8 per cent. Excellent play, guys — but not enough to win. That honour went to the only female partnership in the tournament, Solvi Remen and Paula Leslie. YAY!





I don't know about you, but I was rather crushed when the Chief Medical Officer, Dame Sally Davies, declared that none of us should be drinking more than 14 units of alcohol a week. It was only a few days ago that we chaps were permitted 21.

I can't say that I've exactly taken Dame Sally's advice to heart, although I have been taking it a trifle easy this month, if only to prepare for a forthcoming long weekend in Madrid (the recommended limit for men in Spain being a gratifying 35 units).

The trouble is that what I grandly call my cellar (really a cobwebbed cupboard under the stairs) took something of a battering during the recent New Year festivities and there are gaping holes in the racks where once dozens of bottles lay gently slumbering. I'm sure you're in the same position. Hooray, then, for this timely offer from Tanners, specifically put together with replenishment in mind.

And for those still smarting from their Christmas expenditure or concerned by Dame Sally's announcement, we've ensured that all the wines are priced at under a tenner and all but one are within the recommended range of 12% to 13% vol.

The 2014 Tanners Sauvignon (1) is made in the Languedoc by François Lurton, flying winemaker *extraordinaire*. It has a more modern twist to it than some, thanks to François's research into Sauvignon Blanc overseas, especially in Chile and Argentina. Full-flavoured and juicy with plenty of gooseberry and citrus, it's crisp and clean on the finish and a mere 12% vol. Priced at £8, down from £8.50.

Readers lapped up the 2014 Tanners White Burgundy (2) when we offered it last year, so no apologies whatsoever for its reappearance. Produced from a first-rate vintage by the very fine Cave de Viré Co-operative just north of Mâcon, it's superb value at less than a tenner (we had to twist Tanners' arms just a wee bit). With clean-as-a-whistle Chardonnay fruit and the merest hint of cream, toast and butter (Tanners insists on 'just a hint of barrel' in its production), it's extremely sophisticated and could pass for something far pricier. £9.95, down from £10.90.

Viognier, immensely popular at the moment, is a grape I love and I just couldn't resist selecting the 2013 Zilzie Estate Viognier (3). From a family-owned estate in Vic-

toria, Australia, it's brimming with peach, apricot, honeysuckle, mango and spice and backed by a long, long, creamy, satisfying finish. If Viognier has a fault it's a tendency to blowsiness or lack of structure, but there's plenty of fine acidity here to keep things in check and it makes for a delightfully exotic

*What I grandly call my cellar (a cobwebbed cupboard under the stairs) took a battering over New Year*

mouthful. £9.45, down from £9.95.

Tanners have been buying claret from the Sichel family in Bordeaux for well over 130 years and it's no surprise to learn that James Tanner and Charlie Sichel (host of our hugely successful Château Angludet dinner last November) were in cahoots in producing Tanners Claret NV (4). A blend of vintages — to ensure consistency — and Merlot-dominant, it's famously rich, ripe and juicy and I could hardly bear to put my glass down.

It's textbook house claret and I can't imagine why we've not offered it in these pages before. Sorry. £7.40, down from £8.40.

The 2014 Martinfort Carignan Sélection Vieilles Vignes (5), made from old, low-yielding vines near Carcassonne by Alain Grignon, is perfect for these long, dark, chilly nights, being packed with robust, earthy, inkily concentrated bramble fruit. Serve from a jug or carafe at room temperature. £6.90, down from £7.40.

Finally, another wine ideal for winter, the mouthfilling 2014 Tanners Douro Red (6). The Douro Valley — port country — is a wonderful place to visit, the producers as hospitable as anywhere in the world. Their table wines get better with every vintage, and if you like richly flavoured, deeply coloured reds full of ripe, succulent dark berry fruit, you will enjoy this a lot. £7.20, down from £8.20.

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	5 2014 Martinfort Carignan, 12% vol	£88.80	£82.80	
	6 2014 Tanners Douro Red, 13% vol	£98.40	£86.40	
<b>Mixed</b>	7 Sample case, two each of the above	£106.70	£99.00	

### Total

Prices include VAT and delivery on the British mainland. Payment should be made either by cheque with the order, payable to Tanners Wines Ltd, or by debit or credit card, details of which may be telephoned or faxed. This offer, which is subject to availability, closes on 4 March 2016.

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## Chess

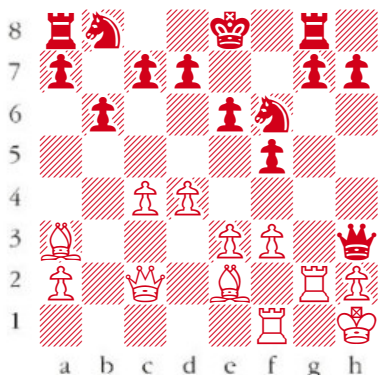
### Pauline conversion

Raymond Keene

Paul Keres, the Estonian grandmaster and many times world championship contender, was born a hundred years ago this month. His record against world champions was very impressive: he defeated all nine in sequence from Capablanca to Bobby Fischer. Keres was probably the strongest player, *pace* Nimzowitsch, Rubinstein and Korchnoi, never to have won the world title.

The hallmark of a Keres win was a flowing initiative, often directed towards the opposing king, frequently converted into victory by a shattering sacrifice. Here he is at his best.

**Keres-Spassky; Riga 1965**



**18 d5!** Despite the two pawn deficit, Keres has a huge initiative against Spassky's disorganised and undeveloped position. **18 ... Kf7 19 e4 c5 20 Bb2 f4** Black is desperately attempting to keep the position closed but White's attack is too strong. **21 e5 Nh5 22 Kg1 g6 23 Rg4 Rd8** This is hopeless, but so is 23 ... Na6 24 dxe6+ dxe6 25 Rd1. **24 Bd3 Rg8 25 Rf2 Black resigns** To add to his woes Black now also has to deal with Bf1 trapping the queen.

**Benko-Keres; Los Angeles 1963 (see diagram 2)**

**18 ... Rxe3** This is an excellent sacrifice of the exchange which utterly wrecks White's structure and leaves him struggling to maintain equality. **19 fxe3 Qe8 20 Qc2 Qxe3+ 21 Kh1 Ne5 22 Rf1 Re8 23 Rf4 f6 24 Qe4** A blunder after which Black is winning. 24 Kg2 left Black only slightly better. **24 ... Ng6 25 Qxe3 Rxe3 26**

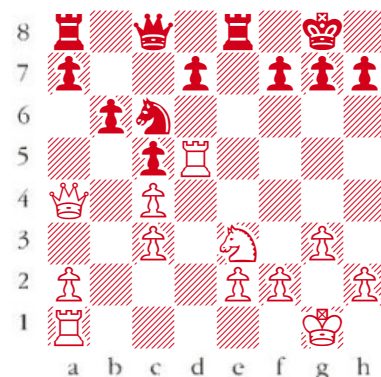
#### PUZZLE NO. 392

White to play. This position is from Keres-Spassky, Gothenburg 1955. Can you spot White's crushing blow? Answers to me at The Spectator by Tuesday 26 January or via email to victoria@spectator.co.uk or by fax on 020 7681 3773. There is a prize of £20 for the first correct answer out of a hat. Please include a postal address and allow six weeks for prize delivery.

**Last week's solution** 1 Rf6

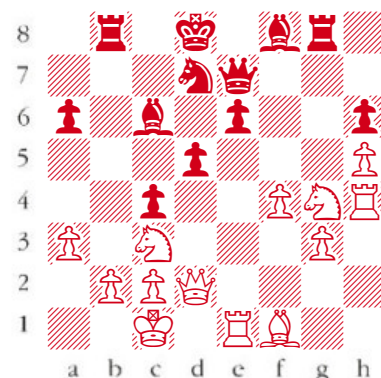
**Last week's winner** Graham Witty, Hull

Diagram 2

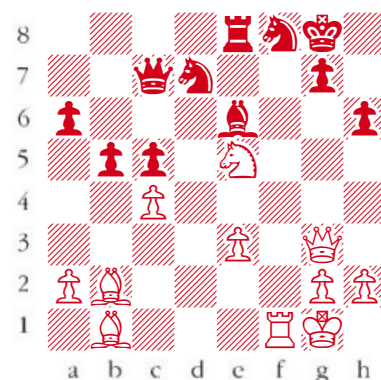


**Rxd7 Nxf4 27 gxf4 Rxe2 28 Rxa7 Rf2 29 Rb7 Rxf4 30 Rxb6 Rxc4 31 Rb3 Kf7 32 Kg2 g5 33 Kf3 Ke6 34 Ra3 h5 35 Ke2 Rh4 36 Ra6+ Ke5 37 a4 c4 38 Rc6 Rxb2+ 39 Ke3 Rh3+ 40 Kd2 Rd3+ 41 Kc2 h4 42 Rxc4 Rd8 White resigns**

**Korchnoi-Keres; Tallinn 1965**



**24 ... Rxb2!** Another excellent sacrifice which generates a powerful attack. **25 Kxb2 Qxa3+ 26 Kb1 Bg7 27 Ne5** The only chance was 27 Re3 Qb4+ 28 Kc1 d4 29 Ne5 Bxe5 30 fxe5 dxe3 31 Qxe3 and White has counterchances. **27 ... Kc7 28 Nb5+ axb5 29 c3 Bxe5 30 fxe5 Rxb3 31 Rh3 Rg5 32 Rhe3 Nc5 33 Rf3 Be8 34 Qa2 Qxa2+ 35 Kxa2 Rxh5 36 Ka3 Ne4 37 Rf8 Bd7 38 Kb4 Rxe5 39 Ra1 Rf5 40 Rh8 Rf2 White resigns**



## Competition

### Going mental

Lucy Vickery

In Competition No. 2931 you were invited to submit a psychiatric report on a well-known figure in literature.

Shakespearean characters featured strongly in the entry, but it was children's books that provided the most fertile hunting ground. Pretty much all of the inhabitants of Hundred Acre Wood — and of Wonderland — found themselves on the shrink's couch, as did Mr Toad (bipolar); William Brown (ADHD; gender/body dysmorphia); and Rupert Bear (Asperger's).

Honourable mentions go to Amanda Nicholson, Julia Pickles, Alan Millard and Alanna Blake, but D.A. Prince is star performer this week and is rewarded with the bonus fiver. Her fellow winners earn £30.

AM is a former sailor, suffering a form of post-traumatic stress disorder and associated feelings of persecution after his last 'trip'. (Note: we have not established hallucinogenic substance abuse although detail — spectral figures, fantastical sea creatures etc — suggest this is possible.) His flashbacks are linked to blame/guilt consequent on estrangement from peer support after the killing of a bird, possibly an albatross: this may represent unresolved childhood trauma (or unhappy relationship vis-à-vis his mother) but AM is not yet sufficiently focused to explore this. Currently we accept his story as presented and the voices (two) he hears. To facilitate this he addresses me as 'Hermit'.

AM is underweight (long and lank) but capable of independent living in a settled community to whom he presents no danger. He is exploring taking control of his own 'story' through talking therapies; we continue to monitor this.

*D.A. Prince*

J has managed not merely to suppress the id but to extinguish it altogether, his ego taking full control of the self. This has become essential in order to maintain his role in a co-dependent relationship with his employer, B, the rampancy of whose id necessitates this compensatory response. J scores exceptionally in all IQ tests, going so far as to suggest ingenious improvements to them with a politeness typical in the passive aggressive. J, a valet by occupation, reveals himself when describing himself as 'a gentleman's personal gentleman'; his unwillingness to discuss possible homoerotic implications from this appellation confirming its importance. Obsessive compulsive traits being occupationally advantageous to him, J seeks to cultivate rather than cure them. Asked to keep a dream diary, J produced a vivid journal confirming all my psychoanalytic theories: it proved as artful a contrivance as any novel. J's phobia of the banjolele warrants investigation.

*Adrian Fry*

Mr Leopold Bloom is a bipolar male of Jewish extraction suffering from severe inhibition loss. He is passive-aggressive towards his wife, a lively,

attractive female with considerable musical ability, preferring the company of his cat. His jealousy of his wife's artistic success and his consequent mental and sexual self-abuse have distorted his marital relations to breaking point. His delusional pretence that he is a character from Greek myth is a prominent feature of his psychosis, which is driven by subconscious identification with heroic gestures often imaginary and grandiose. His unrealised homosexual feelings are expressed in inappropriate liaisons with younger men whom he befriends in the vague hope of watching them copulate with his wife in revenge for her supposed infidelities. Hospitalisation is unfortunately not possible at present due to pressure on beds but a course of Xanax is indicated as a satisfactory substitute, probably for life.

Josh Ekroy

Miss Shalott is a young lady of aristocratic pretensions who presents as persistently hypnagogic, with some signs of hyperthyroidism (restless hands, as if constantly weaving). She suffers from long spells of mutism, and early tests suggest she has bhavatonin receptors in the hippocampus — a rare problem associated with repetitive chanting. It can seem as if stimulants are involved: her steady stony glance gives this (false) impression. There may be some hypothalamic dysfunction. She is certainly hyperactive, and morbidly afraid of desisting from slight movement, although principally supine. She has a worrying predilection for clothing fashionable in the late 1960s. Also concerning is her attraction to dim light, or shadow, of which she is 'half sick' — placing herself midway on the spectrum between wellness and unwellness. There is a problematic addiction to authority, and obedience to it (*cf.* Milgram et al), which I have found personally difficult.

Professor Searle Arnzel-Aut FRCPsych  
Bill Greenwell

The failure of M. Godot to attend any of his appointed sessions has not made analysis easy; it suggests, however, a strong compulsion to make others wait anxiously for his appearance. This in itself allows insight into the roots of his neurosis. From the passive-aggressive tactic of arbitrarily withholding his presence it is easy to deduce a (largely unconscious) need to normalise his own anxieties by recreating them in those whom he leaves waiting hopefully (albeit hopelessly) in the lurch. Significant doubts about his own identity and perhaps even doubts about his own ability to be genuinely present-in-the-world are quashed by the excitement of adopting an utterly negative persona, a human lacuna with the power of what Lacan calls a 'presence made of absence'. What triggered such compulsive self-withdrawal? My speculation is that he unconsciously seeks revenge on a love-object who spurned him in early manhood. Possibly a waiter.

George Simmers

## NO. 2934: RICH RHYMES

You are invited to submit poems suitable for inclusion in *Now We Are Rich* (16 lines maximum). Please email entries, wherever possible, to [lucy@spectator.co.uk](mailto:lucy@spectator.co.uk) by midday on 4 February.

## Crossword

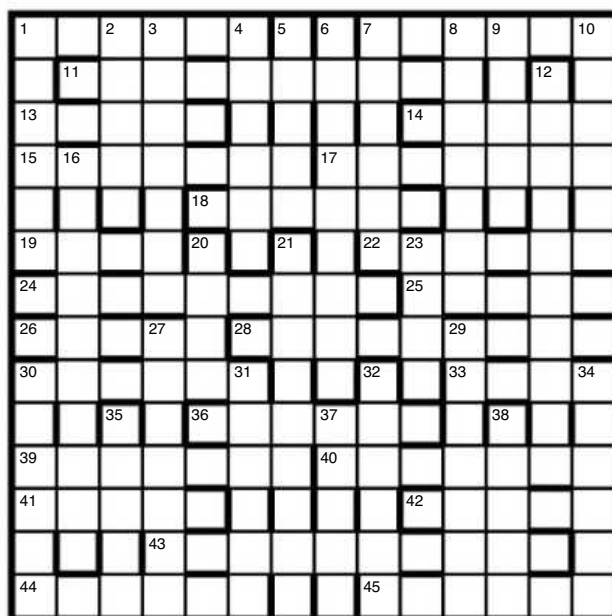
### 2244: Faithful

by Doc

The unclued lights, one of two words, are of a kind, verifiable in *Brewer*.

#### Across

- 1 After the outskirts of Barnsley, overtake on road round town (6)
  - 7 Series for bikers? (6)
  - 13 Regularly burn options and release (5)
  - 14 Like a Peruvian, having completed filming? (5)
  - 15 Mine worker who boozes habitually (7)
  - 17 Saw lead restraining theme word (7)
  - 19 Composer's not accepted old coins (4)
  - 22 Frank nominee dined out (6)
  - 24 Turn a blind eye when poor lady's dropped bicycle part (9, two words)
  - 25 Witness support right away (5)
  - 28 Cruel demeanour stoically destroyed (9)
  - 30 Priority that athletic club has money (6)
  - 33 Cut fish from the east (not hard) (4)
  - 36 Lots of anonymous fools (6)
  - 40 Resort to new boiler suit small brother dropped (7)
  - 41 Moving stair broke (5)
  - 42 Small price you and I rejected for inferior asparagus (5)
  - 43 Frenchman leaving race-meeting troubled relative (10, hyphenated)
  - 44 Sunbed user's old money (6)
- #### Down
- 2 Apparently explosive flower has its day (5)
  - 3 Fatty OAP dies in awful circumstances (7)
  - 4 Continually amongst partners, flower! (6)
  - 5 Monster skin reported by artist (5)
  - 6 A barking baldpate fit for adjustment (9)
  - 7 From the echo, rich singers are described (6)
  - 8 Meet small archdeacon in one of the Pyramids (7)
  - 9 Fortified with spirits and made tight? (5)
  - 10 Offend incompetent sailor (6)
  - 16 Vandal in charge — clans, too, on the rampage (10)
  - 21 Trooper watches, with surprised expression (9)
  - 23 Certainly not a theme-word — though just a bit! (4)
  - 27 Straighten out angle iron, on leaving (7)
  - 29 Trophy on tree, cut with knife (7)
  - 30 Literary lion with witch's heart, on a slope (6)
  - 31 15 squashing soft hat (6)
  - 32 Gent, if drunk, celebrating (6)
  - 34 Half-cut old policeman and comic getting the bird (6)
  - 35 Advance fare (5, two words)
  - 38 French company admits Catholic sorceress (5)



A first prize of £30 for the first correct solution opened on 8 February. There are two runners-up prizes of £20. (UK solvers can choose to receive the latest edition of the *Chambers* dictionary instead of cash — ring the word 'dictionary'.) Entries to: Crossword 2244, The Spectator, 22 Old Queen Street, London SW1H 9HP. Please allow six weeks for prize delivery.

Name .....

Address .....

Email .....



## SOLUTION TO 2241: CUSTOMARY

The unclued lights (1A, 1D, 6A/33, 13, 18, 32 and 38/24) are seven of the 'Twelve Curious CUSTOMS Worth Reviving', as listed in *Brewer* 19th edition.

**First prize** J. Bielawski, Liverpool

**Runners-up** Neil Mendoza, London W11; K.J. Williams, Kings Worthy, Winchester



## Status Anxiety

# The Islamist Nazis and Corbyn's wilful blindness

Toby Young

Many people watching Jeremy Corbyn's interview on *Marr* last Sunday will have been shocked by his remarks about the need to begin a 'dialogue' with the leadership of the Islamic State. 'I think there has to be some understanding of where their strong points are,' he said.

Afterwards, when these comments were widely reported, Corbyn's supporters said they'd been taken out of context — the standard defence whenever he is criticised for saying something positive about Islamist terrorists, such as describing Hamas and Hezbollah as his 'friends' or the death of bin Laden as a 'tragedy'. But there are only so many times this excuse can be used to explain these apparently supportive remarks. It's beginning to look as though the Labour leader really does sympathise with terrorists.

It's particularly difficult to make allowances for Corbyn when you take the broader context into account — the historical links between the hard left and Islamism. I'm currently reading *The Flight of the Intellectuals* by Paul Berman, which, in large part, is about the failure of the European left to see Islamism for what it is: namely, a Middle Eastern form of fascism. Berman documents in painstaking detail how Islamism was transformed into a mass movement by the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s with the



*It's beginning to look as though the Labour leader really does sympathise with terrorists*

twofold purpose of fomenting anti-British insurrection in the Middle East and as an instrument for carrying out the extermination of the Jews.

The evidence linking Hassan al-Banna, the intellectual architect of Islamism and founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, to Nazism is substantial. For one thing, he singled out Hitler as a political role model in one of his political tracts. For another, he was a close ally of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, who helped set up a Muslim division of the Waffen SS in the Balkans. The Nazis gave the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies a good deal of resources, including a network of radio stations that the Grand Mufti used to disseminate pro-German propaganda. In 1942, one of these stations broadcast a speech telling all Arabs: 'You must kill the Jews before they open fire on you. Kill the Jews who appropriated your wealth and who are plotting against your security. Arabs of Syria, Iraq and Palestine, what are you waiting for?'

Initially, the hard left had no difficulty in condemning Islamism. Tony Cliff, the founder of the Socialist Workers Party, wrote a pamphlet in 1946 drawing attention to the fascist nature of the Muslim Brotherhood. But various Trotskyist sects began to warm up to Islamism in the 1980s and 1990s, culminating in a full-blown coalition after the outbreak of the Iraq war. In mass protests organised by the Socialist Workers Party and its European counterparts in 2003, Islamists carrying the banners of Hamas and Hezbollah marched with veterans of the European internationalist left, including Jeremy Corbyn. For the most part they got on well, although there were occasional flare-ups. For instance,

during an anti-war demo in Paris a gang of Islamists broke off to beat up a group of yarmulke-wearing Jews, even though the Jews had turned up to support the cause.

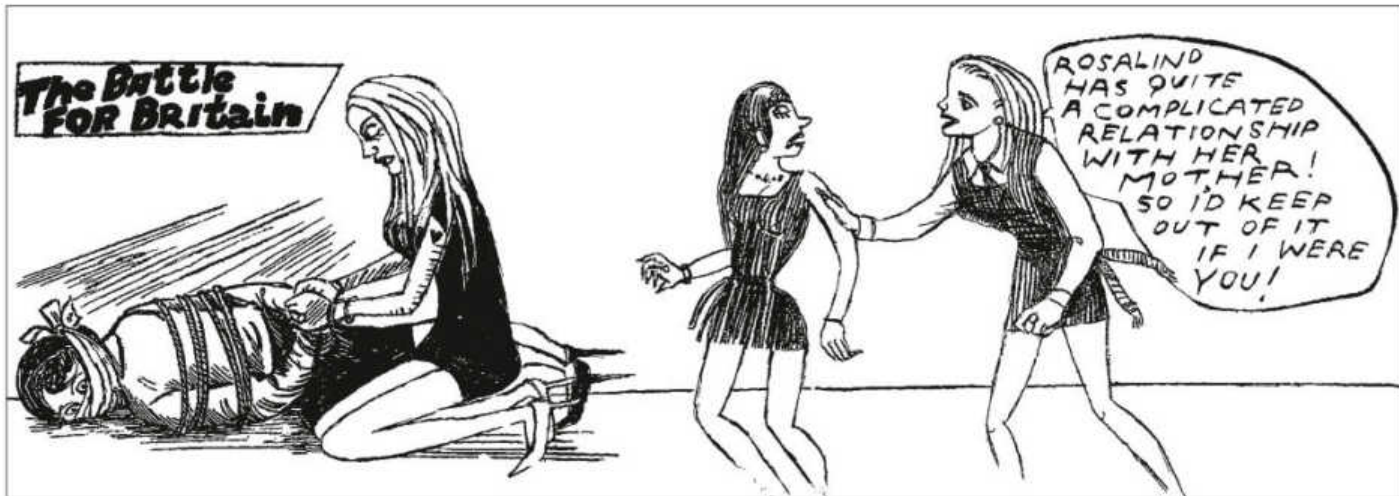
One reason for the hard left's change of heart about Islamism was straightforward political expediency. Here was an anti-western political movement boasting huge support among disadvantaged groups of young Muslims in Europe's major cities. If Trotskyist front groups like the Stop the War Coalition could harness these disaffected youths to their cause, it might lead to a much-needed injection of energy and resources. And to a limited extent, that tactic succeeded, with new hybrid political groups springing up, such as Respect.

But as Paul Berman points out, it was also an expression of a wilful political blindness. The hard left had so much in common with the Islamists — a history of fighting colonialism, a hatred of Britain and America, a contempt for liberal democracy, a romantic attachment to revolution and a willingness to countenance violence as a tool of political change — that they were prepared to overlook some of their less savoury beliefs, such as virulent anti-Semitism. They were also prepared to make excuses for the activities of their more radical elements, such as the Taleban and al-Qaeda.

Back in the 1940s, few would have predicted that this bastard child of Nazism would find an ally in the leader of the Labour party. But it looks increasingly as though that has happened and I doubt if Labour will ever recover.

*Toby Young is associate editor of The Spectator.*

MICHAEL HEATH



## Spectator Sport

### Three sides to our success

Roger Alton

In the middle of Oxford is a socking great cinema: once the Ritz, it's now an Odeon multiplex. Back in 1962, in the intermission of, I think, *The Longest Day*, the curtain moved and on walked a group of men, young I suppose, though to my 15-year-old eyes they seemed impossibly grown-up. It was the Oxford United team, led by their manager Arthur Turner, and including such titans as Ron 'The Tank' Atkinson, his brother Graham, John Shuker and Maurice Kyle. They had just won promotion from the Southern League to the Fourth Division (today's League Two). They were introduced to the audience, and I have been a fan ever since.

Supporting a lower-league team is not always fun, but I would guess it's a damn sight more fulfilling than supporting a global brand such as Chelsea or Manchester United. There are bonds with the players: a lot of people on the terraces will be earning similar salaries to the guys on the pitch. You won't get that at Stamford Bridge (or even at Riverside: legend has it that the truculent Middlesbrough forward



*The stadium owner didn't build a fourth stand because he thought we couldn't fill it. We might now.*

Mark Viduka was getting an earful from angry fans outside the players' car park. 'I pay your wages,' shouted one. 'Really?' said Viduka, 'Fair play to you, mate. You must be one rich fucker.'

It wasn't long ago that Oxford fell fast and far from the Premier League and winning the League Cup to the Conference. But they are back in League Two now and on a hell of a journey. The other day they knocked Premier League Swansea out of the FA Cup with a performance full of pride and poise, purpose and panache.

Oxford have been playing like this all season: high tempo, full of passing, guile and skill, with two or three outstanding players such as Kemar Roofe and Johnny Lundstram. Manager Michael Appleton is one of the softest-spoken guys in football and one of the smartest. He has changed the club's culture from the joyless style of his predecessors. Everyone is dreaming of glory days to come. Possibly! It is exhilarating to watch, even if we do have a three-sided stadium. The owner didn't build a fourth stand because he thought we couldn't fill it. We might now.

The other day the packed-out Kassam Stadium was chanting: 'We're going to win all three, we're going to win all three: the League, the FA Cup and the JPT.' Well, maybe not, but we are a leg away from the Johnson's Paint Trophy final (rarely has home

decor seemed so exciting); we are in the running for automatic promotion and should certainly make the play-offs; and looming is the FA Cup fourth-round tie against Blackburn.

The feelgood factor is everywhere. We led the sports sections in all the papers the day after the Swansea upset — normal for Arsenal fans; less so for us. Oxford is known the world over for its university, but in the town no one really gives a toss about *Brideshead* or a dreaming spire. Their dreams are increasingly about the stirring and awakening up there off the bypass.

Talking of good guys, this could be a great year for England. Captain Cook works wonders wherever he goes with the cricket team. We've won the Ashes and beaten South Africa to go with that series win in India. Stuart Broad is the world's No 1 bowler, and Joe Root only a clipped boundary or two behind Steve Smith as No 1 batsman. Eddie Jones's rugby team looks great; and the football team seems to have something that has been lacking. Speed and youth perhaps.

And roll on the VI Nations. I'm looking forward to Andy Farrell's role as defence coach of Ireland. Imagine his team talk before the England game about how to wind up Owen. Remind him, he'll tell Jonny Sexton, of when he was six and wet himself and threw a tantrum in Wigan BHS. Red card for Owen Farrell.

#### DEAR MARY YOUR PROBLEMS SOLVED



**Q.** We have two granddaughters working hard and happily at university. It is our pleasure to give them some cash at regular intervals for books, rooms, foreign travel and, we hope, a lively social life. But we have just learned that they have each come under the influence of a new political leader, to whose party and cause they are making serious donations of cash. While appreciating their right to do what they want with our gifts, it is far from our wish to support a man whose political views

we reject. Should we take the obvious sanctions?  
— Name and address withheld

**A.** *I consulted a member of my panel of experts with your vexed query. My advisor is a pillar of probity and wisdom and professionally involved in money management. He says: 'You should treat this one with a straight bat. If the grandparents reduce their funding and the girls realise why, they will embrace their rebellious political affiliations all the more. I think the grandparents ought to talk to the girls and say that, whatever happens, they are going to continue handing over cash but the girls should know that if they give money to Corbyn, or whoever else the undesirable is, it will not be what they wish. This moral blackmail should be enough.' I concur with his opinion.*

**Q.** I am staying in a large rented house with my American cousin who is well-off and extremely generous. We are co-hosting a small drinks party and I want to make it clear to the guests that I am paying half, otherwise they will assume that yet again she is footing the bill. How do I do this without appearing vulgar?  
— E.S., Key West, Florida

**A.** *Americans adore giving speeches so why not brief one of your confidants to address the company. He can announce that he would just like to express his gratitude to both hosts for their generosity in throwing the party.*

**Q.** A vague and disorganised neighbour asked me to dinner by text. I accepted immediately but, as the time approaches, I have heard nothing to confirm and

worry she has forgotten. How can I check I am still invited without seeming pushy or desperate?  
— F.M., Harrow

**A.** *Send a cheerful text offering to bring a pudding.*

**Q.** Our daughter has had three children in four years of marriage. This is none of anyone's business, yet we are asked intrusive questions such as whether she does not believe in birth control. It is as though such an output must be a mistake rather than a cause for celebration. How should we put these impertinent people in their place?  
— Name and address withheld

**A.** *You could reply: 'Well, it is of course physically draining for her, but she knows that with genes like hers, it's her duty to society.'*



## Food

### Brass tacks

Tanya Gold



The last time I reviewed a restaurant in Selfridges, a PR man rang up to ask what he could do to change my opinion of Selfridges. Don't worry, I told him, *Spectator* readers don't go to Selfridges to sit in a fake Cornish fishing village, because they are too busy eating the remnants of the Labour party. And they don't care about shopping. You don't dress a *Spectator* reader. You upholster it.

I felt guilty about mocking the stupid fake Cornish fishing village so I avoided the next themed restaurant in Selfridges, which was a fake forest on the roof ('inspired by an autumnal forest'... because who can be bothered to go to a real forest if they even still exist?). But I had to review the revamped salt beef bar in the food hall. I love the Selfridges food hall, because it seems to be a fifth columnist at war with the rest of the shop. In most of Selfridges — 'evil Selfridges' — it is advisable to weigh the same as a chihuahua so as to fit into the clothes, or to be very beautiful, so you do not feel outclassed by a hand-

*In the food hall, you can imagine you are participating in a Eurovision song contest for the obese*

bag that is marginally more attractive than you are, and yet still costs £3,000. In the food hall — or 'good Selfridges' — however, you can imagine you are participating in a Eurovision Song Contest for the obese, because they sell Indian and Italian and French and Jewish cuisine. (I am being polite calling it cuisine; it is, salt beef aside, another biblical Jewish curse.)

Historically Selfridges has always served the best salt beef in central London — despite everything I have already said, this still sounds like an astonishing cognitive dissonance — at the Brass Rail. I have only had better at Katz's Deli in New York, which still features a sign saying, 'Send a salami to your boy in the army' and where Meg Ryan faked an orgasm in *When Harry Met Sally*. Now it has added to what anti-Semites will call the Judification of central London by selling a Friday night dinner in a box for the lonely Jew, and fish balls for the Jew who isn't lonely yet but wishes to be. It also does authentic challah bread, due, I think, to the large Jewish dias-

pora in Regent's Park, who will happily eat lobster but will not accept imposter challah bread, because Jews screwing themselves over is not the same thing as non-Jews screwing you over.

The Brass Rail is a white box, with red seats, screened off with brass rails; inside it, Jewish men are hiding, as is usual, but all is not well here. It used to be that you ordered from a pair of men slicing great hot damp pieces of beef or tongue onto white or rye bread, collected your potato salad, paid, added mustard and pickle, and ate your feelings. Now you obtain a number, pay, get a ticket and ask a solitary man to process your order; and because the kind of people who travel for salt beef are not paying attention to their surroundings, because they are thinking about salt beef, it does not work.

Few people manage to obtain a number; when they arrive at the salt beef they have to return for the number. This is all vexing — the more so, I suspect, for being an echo of the typical customer's relationship with his mother, in which love, which we will here call 'salt beef', is sometimes withheld to procure leverage. (If you are not Jewish, substitute 'tuck box' or 'acreage' for 'salt beef'). The potato salad, meanwhile, is over-chilled, over-spiced and inedible; the salt beef, though tired at 5 p.m., holds up.

So, PR man, if you want to change my opinion of Selfridges — and in this case I wish you would — save the Brass Rail!

*The Brass Rail, Selfridges, Oxford St, London W1A 1AB, tel: 020 7318 3115.*



*'Don't you hate it when a siren goes off next door and there's nothing you can do about it?'*

## MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

### Box set

There is no chance whatsoever of *box set* being replaced by the more correct form *boxed set*. So stop seething about it and causing yourself distress.

The form, *boxed set* has been in use for 125 years or so, but the *Oxford English Dictionary* has dug up a reference from Wisconsin in 1969 to a 'box set of tumblers'. Admittedly, binge-watching a set of tumblers for hours on end would be a minority interest.

The triumph of *box set* is partly a matter of phonetics. In ordinary speech the *d* after the *s* sound in *boxed set* is hardly out



before the poor old tongue gets round to hissing the initial letter of *set*.

There is an analogy here with *sixth*. I have heard people complain of news-readers or actors on television mispronouncing *sixth*. The tendency is to say *sichth*. We may all swear that we say *sixth*, but recordings suggest otherwise. It has never been a word to be pronounced phonetically. The

Elizabethans were not too hot on the *th* sound. In the First Folio of Shakespeare, for example, the names of three history plays are spelt *Henry the Sixt*. So it seems to be a choice between the *x* and the *th*. You can't have both.

The opposite tendency is to be seen in *terraced houses*. That seems to me the prevalent form. Keen pedants insist that it implies they are terraced like the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. To be sure, Jane Austen wrote of a 'Terrace House' and James Joyce wrote it as one word. An interesting anomaly, which the *OED* caught up with in 2007,

has been to use *terrace* to mean just one house in the terrace. It found a reference in 1894 to the ambitious man 'hurrying to get rich and own his little terrace'.

I have even heard domestic grammarians insisting it is an error to write of a *bomb site*; it should be *bombed site*. No example of *bombed site* is to be found in the 20 volumes of the *OED* (now grangerised by bulky online interpolations). So we should peacefully sit in our terraced houses next to a bomb site gorging on box sets without fear of censure.

— Dot Wordsworth



# SPECTATOR WINE CLUB

## UPCOMING EVENTS



### *The Spectator Wine School*

Booking is now open for the Spectator Spring Wine School. It is a great opportunity to be tutored by the best in the wine business. It is aimed at enthusiastic beginners and all those wanting to expand their knowledge of the main wine regions.

For eight weeks running, the magazine's Wine Club partners will each give a class on their specialist region.

The final class will be a champagne tasting hosted by Pol Roger.

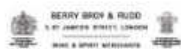
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### *Winemaker's lunch with Herbert Hall Winery*

Join us in the Spectator boardroom for the first in this year's series of Spectator Winemaker lunches with Nicholas Hall, owner/winemaker at Herbert Hall Winery in Kent, whose sparkling wine was recently named one of the top ten in the world by the Wall Street Journal.

Nick will introduce his spectacular, multi-award winning 2013 Herbert Hall Brut and 2013 Herbert Hall Brut Rosé (as served in The Ivy, Le Caprice, Harrods and Harvey Nichols) over a delicious three-course cold lunch provided by Forman & Field.

The south of England has the perfect *terroir* for fine fizz – why else would Champagne Taittinger have just bought 69 hectares in Kent? – and Nick, a highly engaging advocate of English wines, will happily field guests' questions as to their future.

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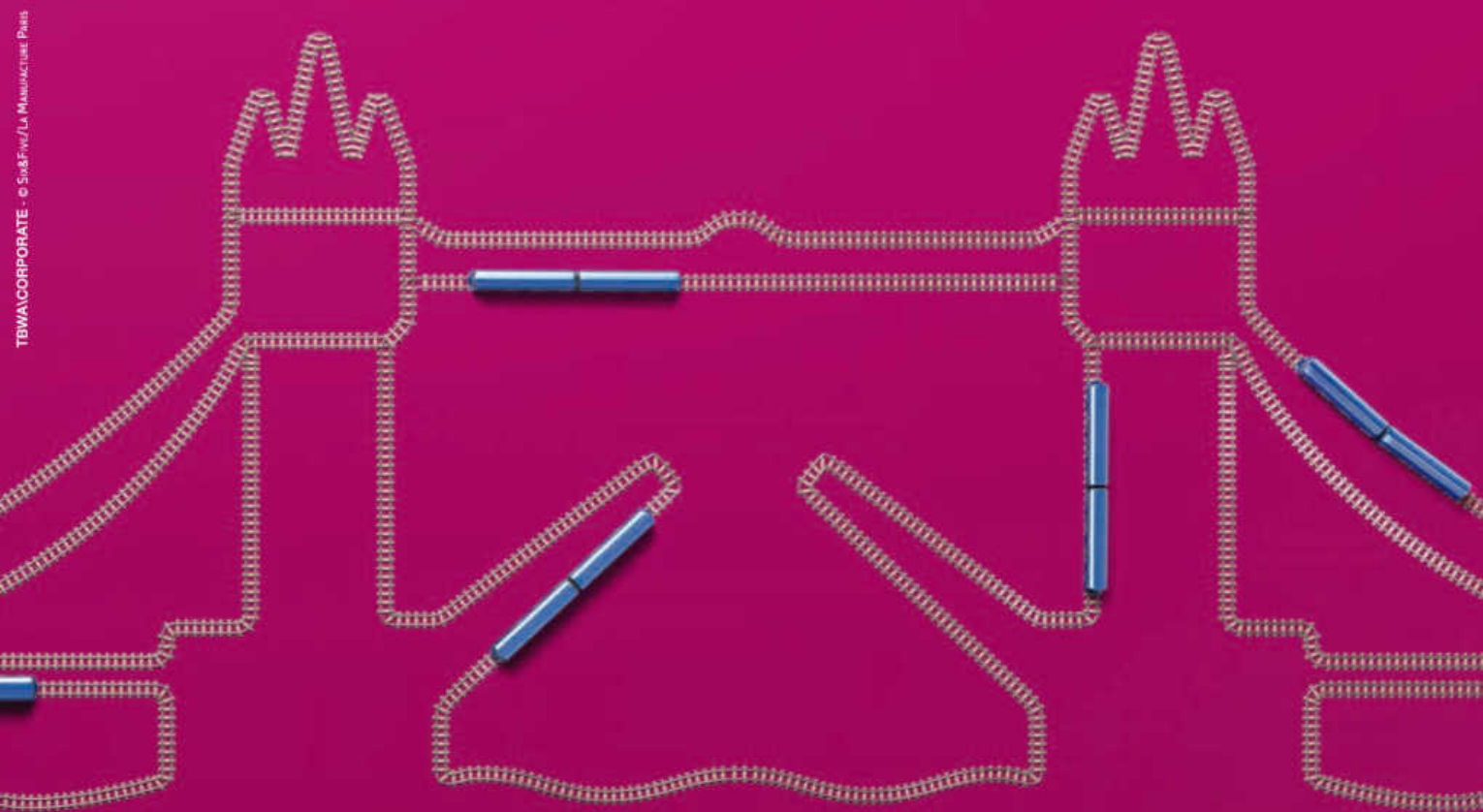
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